

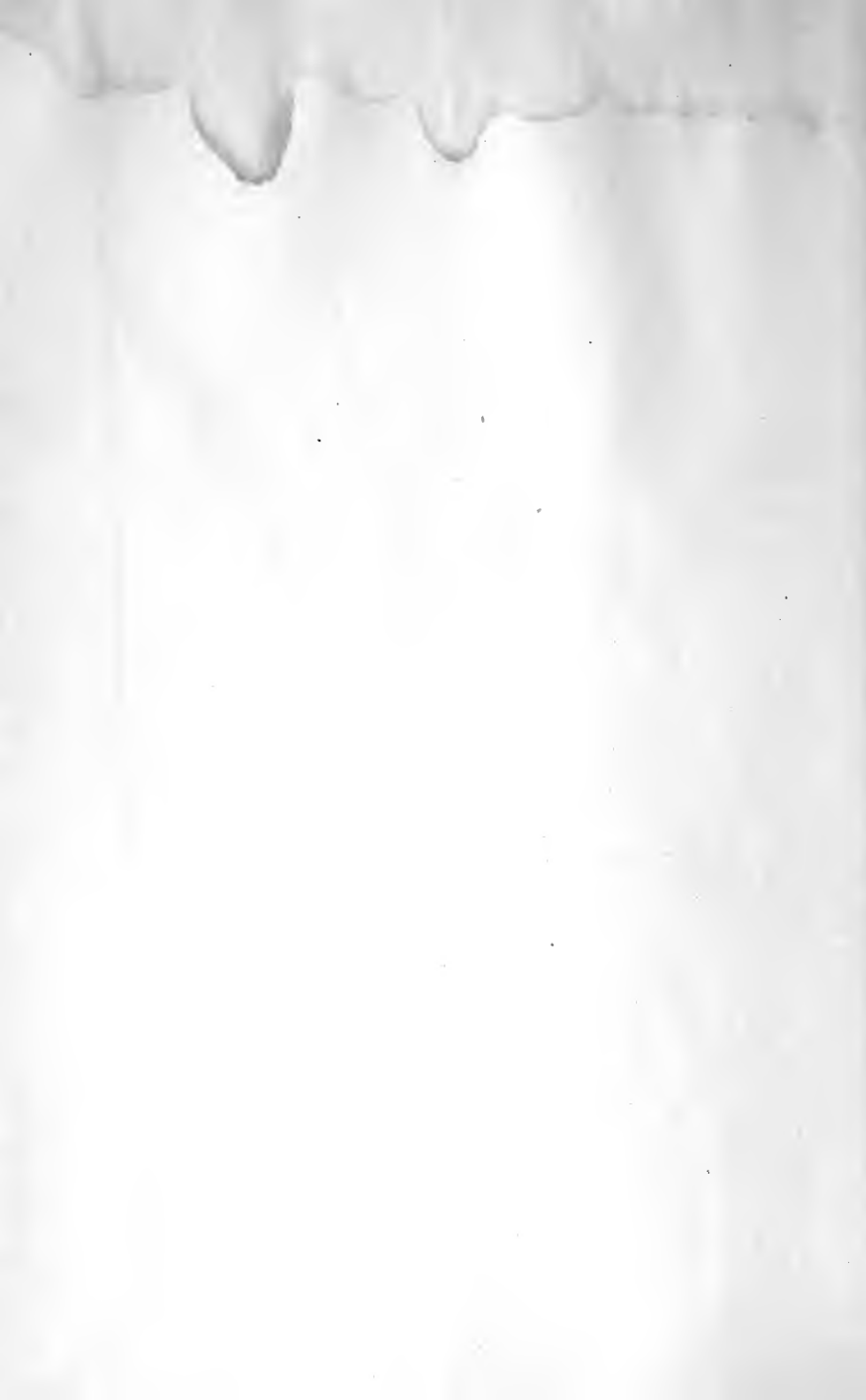


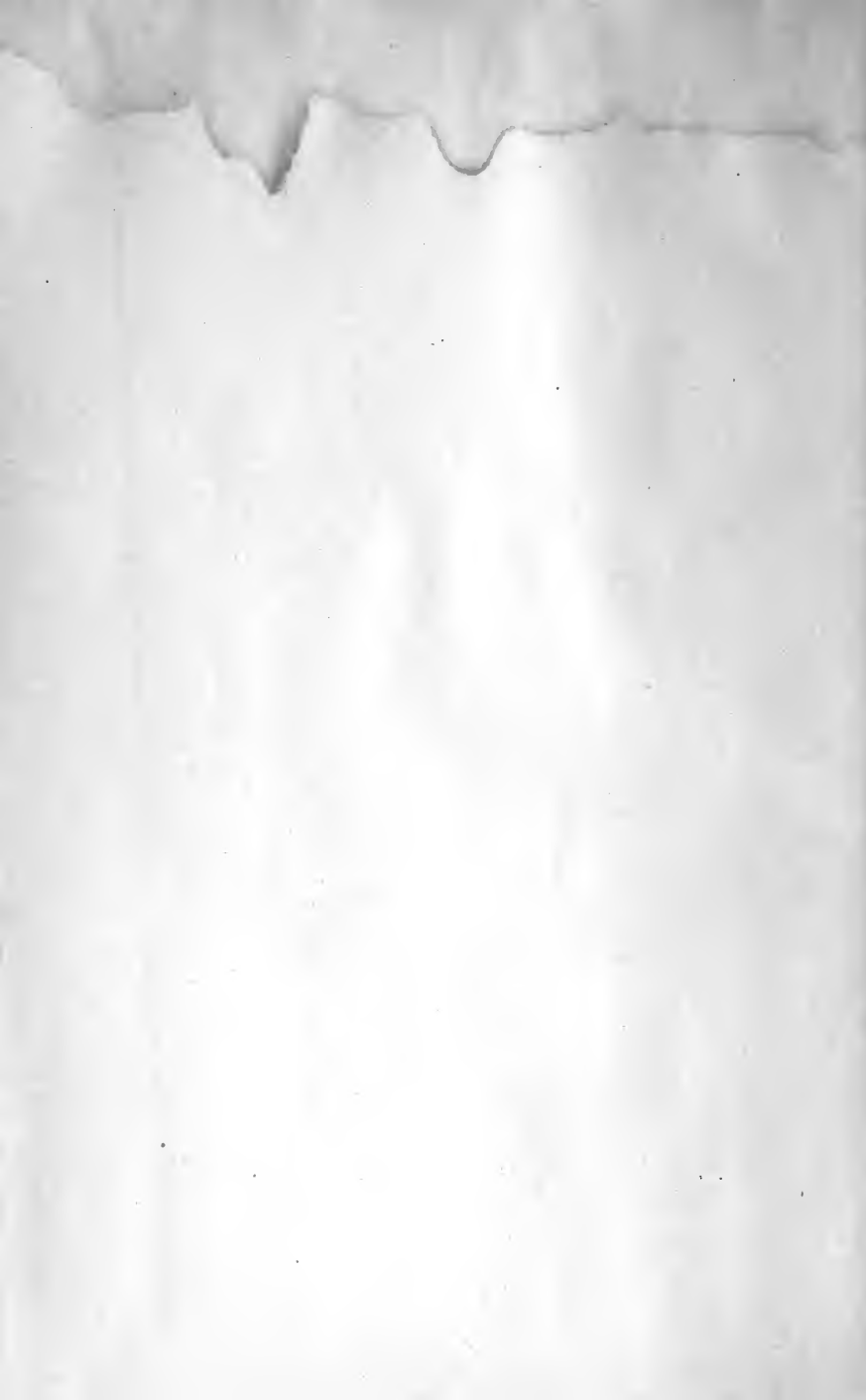
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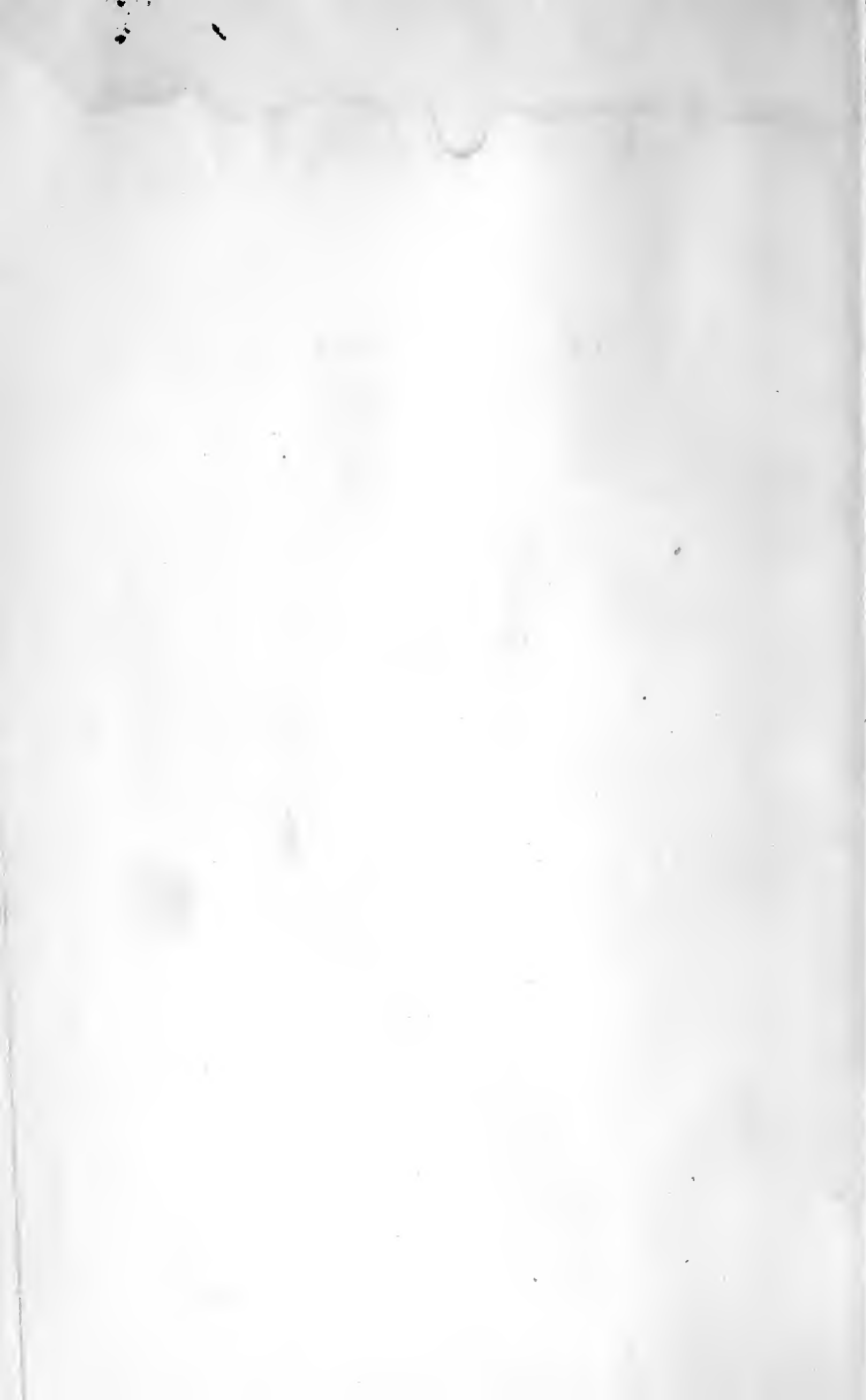




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'ALL HAIL'



‘ALL HAIL’

SIMPLE TEACHINGS ON THE BIBLE

BY
BARONESS FREDa de KNOOP

NEW YORK
HAROLD OBER

1911

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TO
BARBARA,
MY GRANDCHILD AND GODCHILD.



PREFACE

AN enthusiastic love of the Bible must be my excuse for publishing this book. To my love of the Bible has been joined a love of Italian art, which has developed during many visits to Italy and which has guided the choice of my illustrations. The book, at first planned for young children, has grown into a serious attempt to help older children and even adults to understand the Bible, to help those, I mean, who have not the use of the best commentaries and the best Bible dictionaries. I have been aided in my work by kind friends to whom I owe a debt of gratitude. Mrs. Thynne's beautiful reproductions of celebrated pictures will, I feel sure, appeal to all. The work of editing has proved very heavy, for much of the book has had to be rewritten. This work has been carried out by an old friend of mine, the Rev. J. Verschoyle, to whom I am deeply grateful. He has done his best, without discussing debated questions, to improve a work conceived from the traditional point of view. In my ignorance I did not realise the vast extent and complexity of the task I had undertaken in attempting to deal with the whole Bible, book by book. I realise it now with all humility.

The title of my book, *All Hail!* came to me during a conversation with a friend, and appealed to me as being among the first words (and those words addressed to women) which our Blessed Lord spoke after His Resurrection. St. Matthew xxviii. verse 9: 'And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail.'

Travelling in Italy, I learned to feel that most of its art treasures may be regarded as a beautiful Biblical picture-book. As I emerged from the enthusiasm of ignorance into the enthusiasm of a little more knowledge, I thought I would like to try to help simple people, and particularly mothers and children, to understand the Book of books. My own standpoint may be expressed in the words of Jeremiah vi. verse 16: 'Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls;' but this standpoint has become modified by taking into consideration the changed and changing conditions of to-day, and the need, which I have

learned specially in America, of pushing on ahead. My heart goes out to my native land, to Italy, to the Holy Land, to the swarming millions of India, in the longing that all may be brought into the Kingdom and under the influence of our Blessed Lord. My heart goes out to America with the same longing. I pray that these simple teachings on the Bible may be of use to some of the many to whom my heart goes out in goodwill: to people of Canada, of Africa, and of Australia. Our needs are many and various, but the Holy Bible can supply all our needs out of its fulness.

Here I may be permitted to give a passage from a letter to me from Mr. Verschoyle, the friend who has edited my book, which will, I think, be found interesting.

‘The Tercentenary of the Authorised Version makes the year 1911 particularly appropriate for the publication of a popular book on the Bible, designed to help ordinary people to a better understanding of that great library of religious knowledge. Our debt as a nation to the Authorised Version of the Bible is very great, for it has helped to form much of what is best in our national life; and to inspire much of what is best in our national literature.

‘In this connection I may quote a passage from page 24 of your book, which deals with the value of the Old Testament as a means of teaching morals to children, and is fairly representative of the contents of the book.

‘“At this point we may say a few words on the value of the whole book of Genesis, as indeed of the whole Old Testament as a means of teaching morality to the young, and teaching it as practical religion. The Eastern is the prince of story-tellers, and Genesis in particular, and the Old Testament in general, teach by stories, the very best means for teaching children. Genesis, moreover, even beyond the other Old Testament books, has an atmosphere of its own, the atmosphere of God, which of itself is invaluable, as stimulating the moral and spiritual growth of the child. The moral teaching of the Old Testament is never dull, and no one takes it in more readily than the child. Childhood is obviously the time to learn moral law, for the fullest good effects of obedience to the moral law are only to be had by beginning in childhood the self-mastery which is the secret of the right life. In the hands of competent teachers, of parents in the home, and masters and mistresses in the school, the Old Testament remains the very best practical handbook for the teaching of morals to boy or girl, and it is hoped that these simple readings and explanations of the Bible may be a help and encouragement to parents and even to school

teachers to bring home the life-giving contents of the Bible to the children in their charge.

“It was the Old Testament of which St. Paul wrote to Timothy that it was given by inspiration of God, ‘that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.’ The effect on the moral life is one of the tests of true inspiration, and the Old Testament emerges triumphantly from this test, in the case of adults, as well as in the case of children. The Bible (the New Testament, of course, but not without the Old) is God’s chief instrument for the education of the world, in that which is most important, the power of a righteous life. The regular reading of the Bible and a practical knowledge of its contents have formed the character of the English-speaking race in the past and are needed to continue it in the future. We cannot live without ideals, ‘but the Bible,’ says Bishop Westcott, ‘not only offers to us an ideal of service and sympathy and fellowship, of love to God and man, which answers to the noblest aspirations of all men, but also supplies us with a motive to seek it and power to approach it, the sense of Christ’s love for us, and the sense of Christ’s presence.’”

“This unrivalled power in the Old Testament of training the moral sense in children is perhaps due to the intense interest aroused in them by its vivid stories of real men and women, full of breathing life.

“Tolstoy found this power of the Old Testament in rousing interest absolutely unique in his remarkable experiments in the schooling of peasant children: “Of all the oral subjects I tried during three years, nothing so suited the understanding and mental condition of the boys as the Old Testament. The same was the case in all the schools that came under my observation. . . . It seems to me that the book of the childhood of the race will always be the best book for the childhood of each man. . . . To alter or to abbreviate the Bible . . . appears to me bad. All, every word, in it is right, both as revelation and as art.”

“After Tolstoy had tried in vain with other books and other teaching to win his pupils he says, “Then I tried reading the Bible to them, and quite took possession of them. . . . The corner of the veil was lifted, and they yielded themselves to me completely. They fell in love with the book and with learning and with me. It only remained for me to guide them on. . . . To reveal to the pupil a new world, and to make him, without possessing knowledge, love knowledge, there is no book but the Bible. There are no other works—at least, I know of none—which in so

compressed and poetic a form contain all those sides of human thought which the Bible unites in itself. All the questions raised by natural phenomena are there dealt with. Of all the primitive relations of men with one another, the family, the State, and religion, we first become conscious through that book. . . . The development of a child or a man in our society without the Bible is as inconceivable as that of an ancient Greek would have been without Homer. The Bible, both in its form and in its contents, should serve as a model for all children's primers and all reading books. A translation of the Bible into the language of the common folk would be the best book for the people."

'A book which Tolstoy, certainly not an ecclesiastically-minded layman under priestly domination, found absolutely essential to modern education will never, one thinks, be given up in our English elementary schools. But there are ominous signs of a growing disregard of the Bible among adults of the wealthier as well as the poorer classes, which, if it continues, is bound to influence the children.

'As that great student of the Bible, Bishop Westcott, wrote twelve years ago: "There is much discussion about the Bible, but, as I fear, little knowledge of it. We are curious to inquire—and it is a reasonable curiosity—when this book and that, was written; but we are contented to be ignorant of what this book or that book contains. We remain blind to the magnificent course of the Divine education of the world . . . nothing less than our national character is at stake in our regard for the Bible. . . . We are beginning to forget, under new conditions of life, what has made England great, and what, as I believe, alone can keep it great."

'Bishop Westcott's words warn us against a national danger, which has not lessened in the last twelve years. This book is an attempt to supply parents and teachers who have not time to consult more ambitious or learned works with an easy help to the better understanding of the Bible which may encourage a closer study of its life-shaping contents.' So ends my extract from Mr. Verschoyle's letter.

With this introduction I leave to the judgment of the public this very humble endeavour to encourage in the average reader a more intelligent study of the Bible, not forgetting, when we have done our best, what the greatest and most highly-equipped student of the Bible of late years called 'the vast and unapproachable mysteriousness of all truth. Because we see clearly what we do see, we shall know that we do not and we cannot see all.' (I Corinthians

xiii. verse 12 (R.V. with marginal reading): 'For now we see in a mirror darkly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know fully even as also I have been fully known.'

FREDA DE KNOOP.

Among the books that have been used in preparing this volume, to parts of which it is indebted, are the following: Dr. Hastings' larger Bible Dictionary in five volumes; the Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges; Bishop Westcott's and Bishop Lightfoot's Commentaries on Books of the New Testament; The Speaker's Commentary. Driver's Genesis and Ramsay's and Farrar's works dealing with the life and work of St. Paul; also Bishop Ryle of Winchester's *Early Narratives of Genesis*, and the Bishop of London's excellent little books dealing with the difficulties of the Old Testament and the New.

will serve us (R.V. with marginal reading) - If now we are in a better state, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know fully even as also I have been fully known.
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FOREWORD TO CHILDREN

FOR you all, dear children, this book has been written, and to you this foreword is addressed. It was for you that the whole book was, in the first instance, conceived and written. It has grown insensibly from being an attempt to make the Bible intelligible to young children, into a continuous account of all the books of the Bible from a convinced but not a narrow conservative standpoint, a modified traditional point of view.

[You, my dear children, will find the study of many of the books of the Bible too difficult for you at present, but it is my hope that your parents, especially your mothers, and perhaps your school-teachers, will get such help in my chapters as will enable them to instruct you intelligently, and, may I add, with some of the loving enthusiasm with which this book was written.

And now, my dear children, let me say a few words specially to you to whom this book is dedicated.

God is Love. God is Light. God is a Spirit. God is a Consuming Fire. It is the Bible that tells us this. Let us talk about this a little, and together try to find out what this means. Love is the greatest thing in the world. Love can accomplish anything. Whatever wonderful powers we may possess, all is of no value unless we have Love—love for our Creator and love for our fellow-creatures. God is Light. We know what a beautiful thing is light; without it life fails and dies. God is a Spirit. This means that we must not think of God as being as we are, limited by the flesh. Nobody can see Him here with the eyes of the body. When we go to Heaven we shall see Him with the eyes of the soul with which we do already see Him, to some extent, through the veil of our flesh. His beloved Son Jesus Christ has assured us of this.

During our life on earth we feel God's nearness to us. He chooses our hearts to live in, because that is the best part of us. I am sure you have heard people sometimes say: This man has courage; or, That woman speaks the truth. Can we see courage? No. Courage is not blue or green. Can we touch truth? No. Truth has no corners or edges. And so we come to understand that there are quite a number of things which we cannot see, but which are, nevertheless, of the very greatest importance. Thus,

when we are told that God is a Spirit, we begin to realise that this means a great deal.

God is the first cause of everything. Nothing can exist without Him. God is a consuming fire. The explanation of this is, that all wickedness shall finally be destroyed. In its proper time, all wickedness shall be made by God to pass away, so as to give place to Love and Light and Spirit. God is All-Powerful, and unites all good in His One and Only Supreme Being.

My dear little child, have you ever thought anything at all about such things? Who are you? A little boy or a little girl? Perhaps your name is Barbara? Perhaps you have a little sister and a little brother? Perhaps you have a mother and a father. You have a home; you have a garden with flowers in it. You see and feel God's beautiful sunshine. Perhaps you count the raindrops, going pit-a-pat down the window-pane, in your nursery; have you given it a thought who it is that is so kind and loving as to give you such delightful things?

You remember, I am sure, that you had a birthday some time ago, and that you got presents—perhaps a cart and horse; perhaps a Paris dollie which came across the Channel and wished you many happy returns of the day; perhaps you had a birthday cake, with three, four, five, or even more candles upon it: everything was given to you in order to give you pleasure. Then your mother said to you: 'Are you a happy child? Will you not come and say, Thank you?'

And have you not felt that you must at once put your arms round her neck and your father's and give them a kiss and a tight love-squeeze, and tell them how you love them? Well, God is watching over you all the while. He wishes you, little boy and little girl, to love your Heavenly Father because He is the Giver of all good things.

God begins everything and He never ends working. The Lord commands us and all dear children to love Him with all our hearts; to say to Him: "Our Father," pity my simplicity. Look down upon me and teach me to love Thee with all my heart. I wish to please Thee, and to be an obedient child.'

The Lord has loved us from the very beginning, long before we even knew that we had a mother and a father, when we were a tiny long-clothes baby, and when we were taken to church to be christened.

You have not forgotten, have you, when you were taken to church, and saw the holy water of Baptism being put on your little brother's forehead. You were told to be very good and

quiet in church, and to pray to God for the tiny baby, asking Him to let the child grow up a good boy. But God does love us so. He it is who puts us into this beautiful world to live in for the present, until that time comes when He calls us into a far more beautiful place still—His Own Home, called Heaven—there to live with Him for ever.

God gives you your mother. She prays for you. God puts all good and pure thoughts into her head and heart, to love you so dearly, to care for you so tenderly, to feed you so that you are not hungry, to clothe you so that you are not cold. She teaches you to read your Bible, as her mother taught the Blessed Virgin in our picture. Why has the Lord given you, little girlie, your blue eyes? Put your hands over them and close them tight. What happens? Is it light or dark now? Do you like it so much when you cannot see? I think that you will say: 'I do not want to keep my hands there any longer; I want to open my eyes wide.' And I fancy you will say: 'Oh! how glad I am that God has made me able to see.' You will say: 'I am grateful to Him for having given me eyes with which to see so much. I can find my way in the fields; I can see the blue sky. I can see my dear doggies when they come a walk with me, when they caper about, enjoying themselves, running after the poor little bunnies. I can see my beloved pony when his big, clever eyes look into mine, while he seems to be telling me to get on his back and have a lovely canter all along the breezy downs, feeling the fresh wind on my cheeks.'

There is simply no end to the things you can see. You long to say: 'How I do thank my Heavenly Father for giving me eyes.' Another time you go a walk. It is Sunday. Your nurse takes you past the village church. It is all overgrown with ivy. Little dicky-birds come flying from among the ivy; some of them have their nests snugly tucked away there. The robin redbreast, the busybody sparrow, the sailing swallow, the mellow-voiced skylark, all of them and many others meet together; leave their respective nests, and raise their notes, singing away and thinking: 'My home is so cosy; I can fly, I can see God's beautiful sunrise and sunset. I want to praise my Maker, I am such a happy birdie.' Away goes he, soaring up, ever higher. You lose sight of him, and you cannot hear him more. You hear something else. What is this? People are singing in church, 'Onward, Christian soldiers.' You keep very quiet, so as not to disturb anybody; you put your finger to your mouth and you whisper to your little sister to be quiet. You say to her: 'Listen!' Why do you listen? Because you wish to hear. We love to hear beautiful music. We love to

listen to our mother when she sings to us, or to our father when he plays for us. We are thinking of our winter evenings at home, when we children come down after tea.

Then there are our brave soldiers we love to hear playing, when they go marching along following their inspiring band, when we hear and join in 'God save our Gracious King.' All of us love to be able to hear, and we ask ourselves: 'I wonder who it is that gives us our hearing, gives us our sight, gives us our thoughts, gives us our being able to love: in fact, who it is that gives us everything. Is it always the Same One? Is it always our loving Heavenly Father?' And we know it is He and only He. There is nothing that can be thought of, there is nothing that can be done without God. You cannot do one single thing, little or big, without God seeing and knowing it.

God, the Holy Spirit, desires us to love Him. This is His condition. This He expects from us. Only thus can we show Him our gratitude. Although we do not see the Lord, He, because He is the All-powerful God, and can do everything, sees us all the while. The Lord is present everywhere. He sees us, when we are trying to be good, and then He is pleased. He sees us when we are disobedient, and then He is sore displeased. Why is the Lord not satisfied with us when we do wrong? Why is He sad? He so great, we so small.

Why does He care about a tiny child? Because the Lord loves it so dearly. You little child, you do not like to see your brother crying when he is in pain and ill, do you? This makes you very sorry. You cuddle him, and you say: 'There, there, don't cry; it will soon be better.' In the same way, but infinitely more tenderly and wisely, does our Heavenly Father care about each one of us. He wishes us to be happy. He has given us many beautiful gifts, and expects us to be obedient and good, which alone can secure happiness for us. Don't you therefore think that you must try hard to please God, when He has done so much for us?

There is an illness which causes God to be most sad of all. This illness is called a guilty conscience. This means, that when we do wrong, something right inside of us tells us that we have done that which we ought not to have done. We feel very uncomfortable, ill at our ease. Something in our hearts, there where God lives, speaks to us and chides us. We know at once that it is our conscience speaking. God has given us our conscience, and wishes us all always to listen to what it tells us, before it is too late. He has given us our conscience as our best friend. As soon as ever we know that wickedness is driving out

love and light from our hearts, we must pluck it out, fling it away, and make a bonfire of it. God's Fire consumes all wickedness. *Just as the fire burns up the bad weeds in the garden.

I want to say to you some more about our conscience; I hope afterwards you will never more forget what conscience is. Your father has told you never to tell an untruth. Remember that all your life. You must never be afraid of speaking the truth. You can never help feeling very much afraid when you tell an untruth. I will you why it is so. Supposing you speak up bravely and you say: 'I am very sorry indeed, I have broken a glass.' Or you say: 'I have been unkind, I have snatched away the dollie from my little sister, and I would not let her play with it.' Or you say: 'I want to beg pardon; I lost my temper, and I scratched the nursery-maid.' Well then, you will be told: 'Indeed, you have been a naughty child.' In future you are expected to give up being naughty. You feel that this is right and fair, that you should be blamed. You are honestly sorry, and you are forgiven.

Now comes the other thing, not speaking the truth. The child says: 'It was not I who spilt the ink. It was some one else who spoiled the tablecloth.' And the child knows that it was not some one else, but he himself. Now this is what is so wicked; you have no idea how horrid it makes one feel. The child becomes afraid of looking up, and will be found out all the same. The child who spoke the untruth has to be punished; it hid away a nasty dirty thing which soiled its clean and cheerful heart. An untruth makes your heart as ugly as dirt makes your face. Let us take a walk into a lovely garden. Do look at all these happy children playing about, how they are enjoying themselves. Their hearts are clean and healthy, and that is why they are having such a good time. What a pity then it would be to spoil everything.

But such is surely the case as soon as we forget what we have been told, if we are disobedient, if we do wrong. You have been told not to pluck the flowers from mother's favourite bed in the garden, the lovely pink and white and yellow roses. Now you and your conscience—because you cannot leave your conscience behind if you tried—see the roses, bathed in the bright sunshine. Your fingers itch. You think: 'I want them.' 'No,' says your conscience, 'no, you have been forbidden to pluck them.' Had you listened to your conscience, you would have remained a happy girlie.

What do you do? You forget your promise. You stoop. All people have to stoop when they do wrong, instead of remaining upright as God has made us. You stoop down, break a poor stem

in two. You gather the roses. You prick your fingers. That hurts; but your conscience hurts a great deal more. You hold the flowers in your hand tightly. You see the gardener coming. You know that he is going to scold you. You run away. Why? Because your conscience makes you feel naughty and afraid. You did not want the gardener to see the flowers. You fling them away on the ground, into a bush, in order to hide them. How cruel! They hate to lie withering on the ground. They love the sunshine. They have been plucked off by a naughty child, and lie fading and dying. They can no more drink the dewdrops, or invite the bees to look for honey. All their joy is over, and why? Because of a naughty, disobedient child, who is feeling unhappy too, and a great deal more so than they.

You have done wrong. You have broken your word. You wish to forget all, but you find you cannot. You have trouble written on your face. Your father came into the garden and said to you, 'Why do you look so miserable?' You thought nobody knew about your wrong-doing. You answered, 'I don't know.' You told an untruth.

Do you remember what we have been talking about? Who it is that sees us all the time? Tell me. You have not forgotten? God had seen you. He had seen a little child. You had not been alone. God is always the same, always present. He had seen everything, and you were most unhappy. You confessed your fault, and God forgave you. The Lord sees us by day and by night. When it is light and when it is dark. When we are awake, when we are asleep. He never leaves us, but takes care of us always. This is a most beautiful and comforting feeling; always to feel we have our loving Heavenly Father with us. He gives us courage and hope and help. Never can we give Him thanks half enough. We must never forget Him. We must ever remember His goodness to us, and praise Him.

When you are a school boy or school girl, your teachers will give you marks for your work. This means they will put underneath your exercise in your copybooks in red ink, 'Very good,' if they know that you have tried your hardest. Then you are so happy. You run and show it to your father and mother, and you make them so happy too. A brave sailor who weathers the storm and the perils of the sea, wears a good-conduct badge on his sleeve. He has been praised by his captain, who said, 'Well done.' Then he is a happy man.

Thus are we all happy, just in so far as we try our hardest to do our best. If we try to live good, honest, upright, truthful lives,

then the Lord will some day say to us, 'Well done, good and faithful servant.' He says to you His children, 'Come to me.' When that time comes, then He will enable us to see Him. That will be the very best of all things that can possibly happen to us. To be near Him, with Him, and never to leave Him. He has promised us this. Jesus Christ, His Son, our Saviour, is the proof. Let us serve God all the days of our life. Let us love Him as we ought. He is the Truth, and He is our Father.

FREDA DE KNOOP.



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'ALL HAIL.'*

SIMPLE TEACHINGS ON THE BIBLE.

CHAPTER I.

THE OLD TESTAMENT.

GENESIS I.-IV. (The CREATION NARRATIVES).

God, who gives all good things, has given us the best of books, or rather the best library of sacred books, the Book of books, the Bible. The Bible falls naturally into two great divisions, the Old Testament and the New Testament, which really ought to be written in accordance with the meaning of the original word, the Old Covenant and the New. The Old Testament consists of thirty-nine books in the English Version, though of only twenty-four in the Hebrew, the number of books being reduced by grouping several books and counting them as one book. The books in the Hebrew Bible are further grouped into three main divisions: (1) The Law. (2) The Prophets. (3) The Holy Writings. The Law includes the Five Books (the Pentateuch). The Prophets consist of the 'Former Prophets,' or historical books: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings, and the 'Latter Prophets,' or prophets in the ordinary sense of the word. The Holy Writings comprise the great poetical books, Psalms, Proverbs, and Job, the five Rolls—Canticles, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther—with Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, 1 and 2 Chronicles. The arrangement in our English Bible is known to all, and need not be repeated. It is derived ultimately from the Septuagint, the earliest version made in Greek for Greek-speaking Alexandrian Jews under Ptolemy II., from which it passed into the Vulgate and other versions.

The New Testament consists of twenty-seven books, which arrange themselves naturally in the following groups: (1) The Gospels. (2) The Acts of the Apostles. (3) The Epistles of St. Paul and the Epistle to the Hebrews. (4) The Catholic or General Epistles. (5) The Book of the Revelation. Neither in the

*'And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying "All hail" ' (Matt. xxviii. 9).

New or in the Old Testament is the arrangement of the books in exact chronological order.

The language of the Old Testament is for the most part Hebrew, one of the Semitic family of languages. The portions that are not in Hebrew are in Aramaic or Syrian, and are to be found in Ezra iv. 8 to vi. 18, vii. 12-26. Jeremiah x. 11, Daniel ii. 4 to the end of vii.

The language of the New Testament is Greek, with a few words of Aramaic, but it is the Greek used by the Hellenists or Jews of the Dispersion. This Greek has, manifestly, been subjected to the powerful influence of the Septuagint or Greek version of the Old Testament.

The Old Testament is the history of the covenant between Jehovah and the Jewish nation. The New Testament records the establishment of the new covenant in Jesus Christ, and is the same covenant predicted by the prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah xxxi. verse 33: 'After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.'

What distinguishes the Bible, the Old Testament as well as the New Testament, from the sacred books of other religions is the immense superiority of its contents. It contains, and has always been held to contain, a Divine Revelation and a Divine Inspiration which are absolutely unique. The Revelation is the self-unveiling by which God makes known His will, His mind, His purposes to man. The Revelation is gradual and goes on continuously. God reveals Himself in many ways, in the workings of His moral law, in the experience of the individual and in the experience of the community, in the control He manifestly exercises over the history of mankind, in nature, and above all, in the one complete and perfect Revelation, in our Lord Jesus Christ. Everywhere and always God has been and is revealing Himself to man, but this self-revelation, while open to all, is observed by few.

God's revelation of Himself has been, and is, made in human experience; but all men cannot read clearly the Revelation of God in their own experience, or in the experience of others, and so God's Revelation of Himself has always needed interpreters. Inspiration is the gift of God to man by which the interpretation of Revelation becomes possible. It is specially concerned with the

part God has in human experience. Inspiration might be described as the spirit of God intensifying man's powers of spiritual vision. Or again, it might be described as an intense consciousness of God which sees Him as the chief factor in all our manifold life. But all definitions of Inspiration are unsatisfactory. To attempt it is like attempting a definition of God Himself. It is too wide and deep and mysterious for human words. It can be felt, but it cannot be described, since it is the in-breathing of God Himself into the human soul. As our Risen Lord breathed on His disciples when He said, 'Take ye the Holy Ghost,' so Jehovah breathed into the Old Testament prophets the spirit of power which we call Inspiration. A book is inspired in which this in-breathed spirit of God moves the consciousness of man. It is in this sense that the Bible is inspired. It is alive with the presence of God, and breathes the influence of His Holy Spirit. Indeed, it may be safely said that the real presence of God in the Old Testament as well as in the New constitutes the main characteristic which distinguishes the Bible from the sacred books of other religions. This is a fact amply evidenced by the experience of vast numbers of serious readers of the Bible in past centuries and at the present time throughout the world. The prophets of the Old Testament are perhaps the most notable examples of the continuity as well as the strength of Biblical inspiration. They asserted that God spoke to them directly to their minds and in their minds, and that they felt this Inspiration as a compelling force. This is the recorded experience of Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. Jeremiah (i. 9) testifies: 'Then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.' Amos says (iii. 7): 'Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets. The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?' Though he had an inspired vision into the future, the Old Testament prophet was chiefly concerned with the interpretation of the events of the present. He was, before all things, a speaker for God, a forth-teller even more than a fore-teller. Inspiration, however, in the Old Testament is by no means confined to the prophets, as we shall see at once in concrete example, when we turn to the first chapters of the book of Genesis, the first book of the Bible.

A word more before we begin the first book of the Bible. If we read the Bible reverently and attentively, we shall find it far more interesting, as well as far more valuable, and in the deepest sense far more true, than any other book in the world. The Bible

is the truest of all books. It is full of the highest truth—the knowledge of God and of His dealings with men. The difference between the Old Testament, which is the history of a nation written during many centuries by many hands, and the histories of other nations, is briefly this. While the histories of other nations deal with their earthly and temporary prosperity or adversity, the Old Testament, the history of the Israelites, deals with the relations of the Israelites to God. The standpoint is quite different from that of Greek or Roman history, or even from that of English history. The writers see God's Hand in everything, and God's dealings, whether with individuals or with the nations, are to them of absorbing interest and importance. Everything is illumined by the light of the vision of God. And so the most ordinary events take a new significance from their connection with the undeviating purpose of the Unseen Lord of nature and man, whose Presence is to be perceived alike in the individual soul and in all the varied movements of national and nature's life. Let us study the Bible thoughtfully and prayerfully as full of the true wisdom of life.

We will now look at some Italian pictures, and at the same time we will take the Bible and read what it has to tell us about many wondrous things. And first about the Creation: which means the shaping of a higher order out of a lower. This God does by degrees progressively, in wondrous ways which are beyond our understanding.

'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.' (Genesis i. 1.)

These are the first words in the Bible, and they record the great Foundation Miracle out of which God's wonderful Revelation of Himself was by degrees to be given. This miracle of Creation is the Foundation Fact of Religion. Thus a miraculous element has been from the first attached to Religion which is rooted in mystery.

The opening words of the Bible—the first words of the Book of Genesis—say: 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon' (rather 'was brooding upon,' *i.e.*, like a bird upon its nest, to fit the waters to generate life) 'the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light; and there was light.'

'And God saw the light that it was good' (God's approval of creation is declared seven times in this chapter); 'and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day' (rather to be translated, 'and evening came and

morning came. one day.' Observe the day begins with the evening, in accordance with the Jewish point of view, which began the day at sunset.) 'And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day. And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear; and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas; and God saw that it was good.'

You know very well, my readers, when you are at the seaside, that the ocean always remains in its own appointed place. There is a high tide, and there is a low tide; but both come and go at regular intervals. The house you live in is on dry land. God controls all by His laws, and He takes care that the sea does not overstep its boundary. Let us look at this picture, painted by a painter called Botticelli, whom you will love when you go to Italy, and when you see for yourself all the wonderful things he has put on canvas. Here we see the seaside and the children digging in the sands. Who do you think this Child is in this picture? It is our beloved Lord, who was once a Sinless Child on earth. He is teaching us a lesson. The man you see standing near Him is St. Augustine. He was a very learned man, but he was not so learned as not to be taught something new at the hands of Christ.

In Mrs. Jameson's book, *Sacred and Legendary Art*, in vol. i., page 312, it says:—'While' (St. Augustine) 'was busied in writing his Discourse on the Trinity, he wandered along the seashore lost in meditation. Suddenly he beheld a child, who, having dug a hole in the sand, appeared to be bringing water from the sea to fill it. Augustine inquired what was the object of his task? He replied, that he intended to empty into this cavity all the waters of the great deep. "Impossible!" exclaimed Augustine. "Not more impossible," replied the child, "than for thee, O Augustine! to explain the mystery on which thou art now meditating." Teaching us, at one and the same time, two important Christian lessons, namely, one of Humility, the other of Faith.'

We will give this a thought the next time we see the rolling ocean. Everything in this beautiful world ought to remind us of God. The difficulty is that we so often forget Him. After making the world, God, according to this inspired Creation story, proceeded to create all that is in it. Again we turn to our Bible.

'And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb' (larger vegetation, cereals, and vegetables) 'yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and the herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind, and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the third day.'

'And God said.' The thought of man is seen in what he makes, and so is the thought of God. 'God said' is the very life of God, making itself visible for us to see. What was it that 'God said' in that dim morning of Creation when the earth stretched a bare and barren waste, unclothed as yet by vegetation? The thought of God took visible shape, and became grass and herb and fruit-bearing tree, so that all vegetation is seen to be the word or words of God, the thought of God expressed in visible shape. Grass and corn and the rest of vegetation, if we view them rightly, are words of God to us, our Father's speech to us, His children, for evermore.

Thus this beautiful Creation narrative in the Bible teaches us to love and reverence all nature, to look upon the earth as a glorious place which God saw to be very good when His creative work was done. God's approval surely referred not only to the utility of the vegetable world He had created, but to the beauty also. Note, 'the herb yielding seed after his kind,' which brings before us the marvels of seed-bearing. And truly in every seed there is one of the greatest wonders in the world, the unseen power which no microscope can show forth and no scales, however delicate, can weigh, which shows itself as what we call life alike in the smallest plant and the largest animal. All life on the earth is a wonder or miracle. We cannot tell what it is or whence it came till we turn to the Bible for guidance, and learn that this power comes from God, the Creator of the world and all that is in it.

'And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.'

Here it may be observed that the whole of this matchless and majestic account of creation is written by a great religious mind

from a purely religious point of view. From the religious point of view it is enough to know that the heavenly bodies are of God's making, and show forth His wisdom and power.

The Creation story goes on and tells of the peopling of the waters with living beings. 'And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life' (a better translation is 'Let the waters swarm with swarming things, even living souls'), 'and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth. And the evening and the morning were the fifth day.'

'And God blessed them' (*i.e.*, the living creatures or animals). The customary mark of divine approval became, in the case of these animate beings, a blessing. God loves His animals. He wishes them well. He wishes them to be happy animals, therefore He wishes us also to love them, and treat them kindly. We are never meant to ill-treat any animal, great or small. We are never to be cruel to them. We are not to ill-use them nor to beat them, not to injure them in any way. We are not even to pull off a fly's wing. All animals are God's creatures, and we have a duty towards them. 'The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God' (Romans viii. 19), *i.e.*, waits for men to show themselves children of the God of Love, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Look at our beloved Lord in His babyhood in this picture. He is holding the little bird in His own hand, caressing it. He is, though but a child, teaching all of us. We must follow His example.

In the next picture we see a very good Christian called St. Francis, who once lived at Assisi in Italy, standing among his feathered friends. He thought little about himself. He lived for others. He had learnt God's lesson well. He loved all things both small and great, because the good Lord had taught him that He loves them too. Here we see him giving away all his bread. As the poet says:

'Sweet Saint Francis of Assisi, would that he were here again.
He that in his Catholic wholeness used to call the very flowers
Sisters, brothers—and the beasts—whose pains are hardly less than
ours!'

This opening part of the Bible is an inspired picture-story or vis-

ion of Creation; not intended as a scientific history of it. It reflects the mind of a great inspired poet, not of a modern man of science, for modern science did not then exist.

The value of the picture is that it teaches us that everything is God's making, that behind everything in the world is the Supreme Spirit who made it, sustains it, and rules it, whom we call God.

There remained still in God's mind a last and most wonderful thought, which was to find expression in the crowning work of creation. This last and most beautiful of the Divine thoughts, the creation of man, is described by the inspired writer with due solemnity. It is only after deep deliberation that God enters on the final work of creative thought.

'And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.' The plural 'us' in God's words is noticeable, and different explanations have been given. It may be what has been called a plural of majesty. It may be an anticipation of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, though this is less probable. It may be a relic of some older form of the Creation story. It may be that the Jewish interpretation is right, and that God is represented as consulting with His celestial court before creating the highest of His works. What does 'in our image, after our likeness' mean? It means that our likeness to God is in our spiritual and mental nature, obviously not in our body. It is the possession by man of the power of self-conscious reason, with the power of free-will, and the power of conversing with and entering into an intimate friendship with God. In this spiritual nearness of man to God is to be found the possibility of God being revealed in man, as He was long afterwards in our Lord Jesus Christ, when the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.' In virtue of his likeness to God, man was given a unique lordship over all living beings on the earth, to be to them, as far as possible, what the God of mercy and love is to His human children.

The Creation story goes on (Genesis, chapter i., verse 26): 'And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it. . . . and God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to

every fowl of the air, and to everything that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so. And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.'

The writer of this first Creation story represents God as intending man to live solely on vegetable food, animal food being only obtainable at the cost of animal life. With this ideal picture of the happy relations of man and the animal world may be contrasted the later permission to Noah to use animal food (Genesis ix. 2-3).

Genesis, chapter ii. begins: 'Thus the heavens and the earth were finished and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.'

This passage, which is manifestly the end of the first Creation story, illustrates the awkwardness and arbitrariness of the modern division of the Bible into chapters, for not only do these first verses of the second chapter belong to the first story, but in the fourth verse begins the second and independent story of the Creation and man's beginning on the earth. The account of the seventh day closes the first Creation story. God's rest from His work on the seventh day is referred to, in the book of Exodus, as a reason for keeping the Sabbath. The fact that the Babylonians had a somewhat similar observance on certain days of the month suggests the thought that Abraham may have brought the custom from beyond the Euphrates when he left his Babylonian home for Canaan. The Hebrews, however, differed from the Babylonians in the intense religious earnestness with which their observance of the Sabbath was inspired. Moreover, the Babylonian custom was associated with the changes of the moon, the Hebrew was independent of them. The old Creation picture of the Creator resting on the seventh day inclines us to rest one day likewise, but our day is the Lord's Day, so called from the Risen Lord, the first day of the week. As regards the six days of Creation, Bishop Ryle of Winchester, in his *Early Narratives of Genesis*, takes the days as literal days, observing that the Divine Revelation gives us instruction on things spiritual, not on things of natural science. One might add it would be as reasonable to look for accurate science in an ancient and inspired religious epic as it would be to look for religious poetry in a modern manual of physical science. The religious inspiration of the first account of the Creation which

we have been considering is deep and true. 'The primitive Hebrew tradition,' says Bishop Ryle, 'was made through the Divine Spirit, the first step in the stairway of Divine Revelation.'

The second Creation story may be called the story of Paradise and the Fall. 'The compiler of Genesis,' to quote again from Bishop Ryle, 'selects from two recognised Hebrew traditions parallel extracts descriptive of the work of Creation,' and any one who reads the accounts carefully even in English will recognise the difference of the authorship and the point of view. It is enough to say that the name given to the Creator is different in the two accounts, and so is the point of time at which man is created. He is created last in the first Creation story and created first in the second.

After a few preliminary words the second Creation story goes on thus (Genesis, ii. 7): 'And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.' That the spirit of man comes direct from God is the great truth revealed by the inspired words of this old Creation story. Man had a spirit given him, part of God's own spirit, inbreathed by God Himself. This is why men are God's children. Life is nothing less than the breath of God Himself; that is what this ancient writer was inspired by God to teach us. Life is a sacred thing, and it is high treason against God to misuse it. Again, in beginning the new Creation, our Lord breathed on His disciples and said, 'Take ye the Holy Spirit,' the breath of God as revealed in Christ.

Genesis ii. verse 8, goes on: 'And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And a river went out of Eden to water the garden.'

'And the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden, to dress it and to keep it.' This is the primeval charter of work. God's purpose for man's life is work, and our duty is to work to make this earth the garden of God.

'And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him' (rather, 'corresponding to him'). 'And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every

fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.' The Hebrew 'adam' simply means 'man.' The R.V. generally gives this rendering. The A.V. arbitrarily makes this word a proper name in chapters ii.-iv. The Hebrew 'adamah,' the ground, is in form the feminine of 'man'—'adam'—and so man seemed to the Hebrews naturally connected with the ground and intended to work it.

In the accompanying picture Adam is calling all the animals in a procession. After this, the Creation Story tells us, the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on the man, and, while he lay there unconscious, took one of his ribs and made a woman, the equal help spoken of: the rib origin being a beautiful allegory of the essential oneness of woman and man.

When the man awoke, the Lord God brought the woman to him, and he exclaimed in joyful surprise (Genesis ii. 23): 'This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman' (Hebrew, *ishshā*), 'because she was taken out of Man' (Hebrew, *ish*). 'Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.' Our Lord uses this passage to establish the true ideal of marriage as an indissoluble union (Matthew xix. verse 5).

And now we have come to the third chapter of Genesis, which records the ancient and wonderfully inspired account of the Fall. It is, like the rest of the Creation narratives, to be taken symbolically, not literally. The man and the woman represent the human race. The temptation and fall of man and his expulsion from Paradise are described with an insight into human nature and a preception of the problem of evil and the mysterious reality of man's relationship to God which, already in this third chapter of Genesis, show us, in concrete example, what Biblical inspiration is. The mirror, held up by the story, reflects the likeness to God in man, by which man is able to hold converse with God, and reflects also the mystery of the misuse of freewill, by which man comes under temptation by the power of evil and surrenders to the temptation.

The third chapter begins thus: 'Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the

serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons.' (Gen. iii. 1-7.)

The man and the woman have been already before us, but in this passage a new personage enters on the scene, the serpent. Looking at our picture we see on the left the serpent sitting up. If the man or the woman were to be tempted, there was no one in the Garden to tempt them save the animals, and simply as one of the animals the serpent is represented as tempting woman. To the Eastern mind the serpent seemed and seems an incarnation of cunning and poisonous malevolence.

It is the inspired writer's own opinion that is expressed in the words: 'Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field,' &c. The cunning, the wiliness, the craftiness of the serpent and the way he steals silently to the attack are, with the deadliness of his venomous bite, the basis of his evil reputation, and fit him to represent in this story of Paradise and the Fall the mysterious power of evil of which he is the suitable symbol. He is not, however, here identified with the Evil one, and indeed, the evil being we call Satan is not mentioned in the Old Testament till a much later period. The artfulness with which the serpent insinuates doubts and suspicions as to God's truth and love in the unsuspecting woman quickly results in her surrender to the temptation, and the attraction of the tree and its fruit complete the victory of evil. Evil is thus represented as coming from without the heart of man. It does not originate in man's nature, and its possession of his heart is only temporary till it is expelled by Him who made man in His own image. Both the woman and the man had now eaten of the tree of knowledge, and are represented as passing in a moment from the innocence of childhood into the knowledge of grown-up years.

In the right-hand corner of our picture we see Adam and Eve stitching together fig-leaves, and making aprons, or more properly girdles, of them. Fig-leaves are chosen to clothe their nakedness probably because of the large size of the leaves; and here it may be observed that the mention of figs shows that the narrative cannot

have been taken direct from a Babylonian source, for while the fig grew wild in Palestine and Syria, it was not to be found in Babylonia.

In Genesis iii. verse 8, we read: 'And they heard the voice' (rather, sound) 'of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden. And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the Lord God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me; and I did eat. And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living. Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them.' Eve means Living, or Life.

Thus we read that the Lord God came as Judge to guilty man in the Garden, and pressed for the full confession, which man characteristically endeavoured to avoid, casting the blame on the woman, as she, in her turn, on the serpent; and the Lord God passed sentences on all the guilty three, and first upon the serpent, who had suggested the evil thoughts that resulted in man's fall. The mark of the serpent's sentence, as cursed above other animals,

is that it is to crawl upon its belly in the dust, and its very food is to be dusty. There is to be bitter enmity between the serpent race and the race of men; which as an actual fact has become almost an instinct on the side of man. Here we have come to what is known as the Protevangelium: 'And I will put enmity between thee and the woman and between thy seed and her seed. It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.' This is a symbolic account of the perpetual conflict between man and evil. In such a conflict with the power of evil carried on by God's appointment, in which that power of evil is symbolised by the serpent, the ultimate result will be the triumph of man. But it is in Christ alone, as the representative man, and in union with Him that this victory can be obtained. This is the Protevangelium, the first announcement of the good news of the final victory over evil, which, thanks to Christ, awaits the human race. So far the sentence is on the serpent. The sentence on the woman is pain, especially in child-bearing, and troubles proceeding from her relationship to her husband. The sentence has been profoundly verified by the general experience of after centuries. The operation of sin in the world has caused immeasurable suffering to women. The sentence on the man follows. His lot is to be not merely work, but toil embittered by sin and discontent. After this sentence there is a moving passage revealing God's unchanged sympathy for guilty man. Man had made himself girdles of fig-leaves. God, approving, supplied him with a more substantial covering of skins. Then follows the expulsion from Paradise. 'So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and flaming sword, which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life' (Genesis iii. verse 24). Paradise is an ideal locality; for the Garden in which the Almighty walked and the serpent spoke and man after the Fall could not remain, the entrance of which is guarded by cherubims and a flaming sword, is manifestly nowhere on this earth. This is a symbolical expression of the fact that the Garden of innocence, purity, and happiness cannot be entered again of his own power by man on earth. But this Garden, with the tree of immortality in its midst, has come in the process of many centuries to supply us with the name of the place of peaceful happiness after death, 'Paradise,' meaning the garden (a Persian word signifying an enclosure full of trees). Paradise, the abode of the blessed after death, contains the tree of life. Revelation ii. verse 7: 'To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God'; cf. also Revelation xxii. verse 2.

In these sacred trees in this Hebrew story of Paradise, it is impossible not to trace the resemblance to the sacred trees of Assyrian and Babylonian art, though neither the Hebrew story of Paradise nor that of Creation is directly derived from Assyro-Babylonian sources. The study of the Creation Tablets, and particularly of the third tablet, reveals an unmistakable connection between the Jewish and the Assyro-Babylon traditions, due probably to their proceeding ultimately from a common source. The resemblance is not only to be found in the story of the Creation and the story of Paradise, but also, as we shall see, in the story of the Flood. The original traditions were probably handed down by the ancestors of Abraham, who had himself heard them when he lived in Ur and Haran; but the polytheism which defaced the Mesopotamian religion, and was the cause of the monotheist Abraham's departure to Canaan, has been perfectly purged away by the Jewish writers or compilers, and in its place we find a pure and lofty monotheism, the monotheism of men who breathe the very atmosphere of the Divine Presence. And if the first distinguishing characteristic of Israel's spiritualised version of these early traditions is a unique knowledge of God, the second characteristic is a unique knowledge of man, an insight into human psychology unparalleled at that early period. An excellent way for a reader of the Bible to gain a vivid realisation of the difference between Biblical inspiration and Assyro-Babylonian is to compare the spirit that breathes through the Hebrew narratives of the Creation and Fall and Flood with that which is to be found in those portions of the Cuneiform Tablets that deal with the same subjects.

CHAPTER II.

GENESIS IV.—XII. (NARRATIVES OF THE EARLY TRADITION).

THE next story is also an early tradition, and grows out of the prehistoric stories we have been reading of the Creation and the Fall. It is the story of Cain and Abel, and it, too, has lessons for us. Henceforth the man and the woman, who represent mankind, were obliged to live away from Eden, as men have lived since, conscious of sin, possessing the new sense of sin and of shame, which awoke in the prehistoric past in the far-away time to which the Creation story refers. The story goes on and tells us that a son was born unto them, called Cain; and a second son, called Abel. The latter was a keeper of sheep, while Cain was a tiller of the ground. Each brought to the Lord an offering or present: Cain the fruit of the ground; Abel the firstlings of his flock.

The picture of the bronze door we have before us, was thought of and executed by an Italian artist, called Ghiberti, who lived about five hundred years ago. So beautiful is this work of art, that Michael Angelo said the door was worthy to be one of the gates of Paradise. There are ten magnificent panels, each one of which has a scene from the Old Testament depicted on it. The panel in the right-hand top corner is the one that we will now examine in detail.

In the left-hand corner of our picture of the door, we see a panel representing Cain and Abel, as little innocent children, playing about at their mother's knee. Sitting on the rock is Abel, minding his sheep, his faithful watch-dog all attention, at his side. Further down we find Cain, tilling the ground. At the top you see the altars on which each brother laid his offering. You see also the most terrible deed you can think of. A man deliberately killing a man, and that man his own brother.

We said before that both brothers brought gifts. Both gifts were alike good. But the Lord had respect to Abel's, and not to Cain's. The reason was that God saw the state of the hearts of both. The difference between the two brothers was this: Cain offered his gift only because it had to be done; he did not put his heart and soul into it. Cain gave unwillingly, Abel willingly. The reason why Abel's offering was received with blessing rather than

Cain's is excellently explained by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, who leaves us in no doubt as to the truth. Hebrews xi. 4: 'By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.'

Genesis iv. 5-7: 'And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art Thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.'

The word heredity was unknown to the writer of this ancient narrative but the thing which it represents is well shown forth in the story of Cain, the sin of his parents having developed in him in the form of a sullen discontent, which made him very wroth when his brother's offering was accepted and his own rejected. It is not the intrinsic value of the gift, but the spirit in which the gift is offered that constitutes its value in the sight of God. God sees the heart, and He saw the sullen temper in Cain's struggling to find expression in some violent act. God's words to Cain must be differently translated or paraphrased: 'If thou doest well (*i.e.*, hast a right purpose), shall there not be lifting up (*i.e.*, of thy countenance); and if thou doest not well (*i.e.*, hast evil, envious thoughts), sin coucheth at the door (*i.e.*, like some wild animal), and unto thee is its desire (it is eager to spring on thee and overpower thee). Thou shouldest rule over it' (*i.e.*, conquer and subdue the temptation before it is too strong for thee). These warning words, thus interpreted, let in much light on the psychology of sin.

Genesis iv. 8-13: 'And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him. And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper? And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground. And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand; when thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.'

So Cain, disregarding God's warning voice, indulged his sullen temper, and in the end tempted his brother into a lonely place, and killed him. Then began the judicial inquiry, which we moderns would describe in a somewhat different way from the Hebrew narrator's. We might say, the Divine Voice, speaking through the conscience says to Cain, 'Where is Abel thy brother?' Cain fights

against the Voice, and denies his responsibility, but the Divine Voice will not be silenced. It keeps his crime before Cain's eyes, and passes sentence upon him. He is now cursed from, or rather away from, the ground—that is, the cultivated soil where he had worked, and he must ever for the future be seeking new resting-places. He must be an outcast, wandering over the face of the earth, which, drenched with his brother's blood, has turned against him.

'And Cain said unto the Lord, My punishment is greater than I can bear . . . and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me.' This means that Cain's guilty mind sees the Blood-avenger pressing hard upon his steps. God, in mercy, promised Cain protection from the Blood-avenger. 'And the Lord said unto him, Therefore, whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the Lord set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him.' 'Sevenfold' means by seven of the murderer's family being slain. The sign appointed by God for Cain was for his protection, and must apparently have been something attached to his person. 'And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden' (verse 16). 'Nod' means 'wandering,' a vague region to the east of Eden, not geographically defined.

The narrative of Cain is an example of the way in which sin gains its mastery over a man. It shows us, for instance, the crimes into which an unbridled temper may lead a man, the gradual descent by which a man goes down-hill to become a murderer, the need that offerings should be made with a true and high purpose in order that they may be accepted by God, the comforting fact that God cares for the guilty sinner after he has received his appointed punishment; these and other lessons, intended originally for the Hebrew nation, are now a power for the moral instruction of the world. The sketch of Cain is one of those little master-pieces of the Bible which show how truly, in literature, brevity and simplicity are power.

'And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Enoch: and he builded a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch.' Just as there was no one to slay Cain except his own family, and no one for him to marry except one of his own sisters, so there was no one except his own family to inhabit the city which he built. A pre-Adamite population is sometimes assumed; but the truth is, such difficulties are senseless, for the details of these pictures are touched in with a complete artlessness which should disarm any but the most pedantic criticism.

A descendant of Cain, through his son Enoch, was Lamech, who apparently introduced polygamy by marrying two wives, Adah and Zillah. Adah bore Jabal, the originator of the pastoral life, and his brother Jubal, the father of all such as handle the harp, or rather the lyre, and the pipe. Here in our picture we see him blowing his horn. The original of the picture of Jubal is carved in marble. It has been exposed for centuries, to the Italian sun, to the dust of the street, and also to winter weather. Small wonder that it should be somewhat worn, but it remains a masterpiece, and is well worth our attention and admiration. It is one of the many medallions, each forming a beautiful ornament, and at the same time all of them illustrating Bible stories on what is certainly one of the most perfect buildings ever made by the hand of man, namely, the Cathedral tower known as *Campanile del duomo* in Florence. A shepherd boy, called Giotto, had this lovely idea and carried out and built this tower of beauty. Giotto's name has become immortal.

Zillah, Lamech's wife, bore Tubal-Cain, or rather Tubal of Cain, the forger of every cutting instrument of brass, or rather bronze, and iron. To Lamech is ascribed the first lyric poetry in the Bible, the song of the sword. Lamech returns brandishing his weapon, and boasting to his wives, as an Arab does to-day, of what he has done. He boasts that he has requited a mere wound inflicted on him with death. 'And Lamech said unto his wives, Adah and Zillah, Hear my voice; ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech: for I have slain a man to my wounding' (better, for wounding me), 'and a young man to my hurt' (for bruising me). 'If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold' (Genesis iv. 23, 24).

Lamech's confidence in his power to pay back an enemy's attack with interest was perhaps founded in the bronze and iron weapons provided by his son Tubal-Cain's invention. In the next chapter the writer endeavours to give a picture of the increasing population of the earth and also maps out the genealogy which carries the chosen race from Adam to Noah. In the second verse (Genesis v. 2) 'male and female created he them, and blessed them, and called their name Adam in the day when they were created,' we see that the word 'Adam' (*i.e.*, Man) was originally intended for the race and not for an individual. The age ascribed to Methuselah (969 years) and to the other antediluvian patriarchs is, of course, not to be taken as literally accurate. The Israelite tradition, dealing with prehistoric personages, was in the habit of greatly lengthening their lives, in imitation, perhaps, of their kindred, the Babylonians, who ascribed, according to Berosus, to **their** ten antedil-

uvian kings reigns of such length as completely dwarf the long lives of the ten antediluvian patriarchs, Xisuthros reigning 64,800 years and the ten kings together no less than 432,000 years. It is obvious that there is here no attempt to deceive, but Hebrew tradition follows with transparent simplicity the usual course of prehistoric tradition. Extraordinary knowledge as well as extraordinary length of years were freely assigned to those who lived in the golden age of antediluvian man.

The next chapter (Genesis vi.) begins with what appears to be a Hebrew tradition, abruptly introduced immediately before the story of the Flood. It tells of the union of the sons of God and the daughters of men, and of the giants that were apparently the issue of that union. Probably the passage is introduced here as an example of abnormal wickedness which made the Flood a necessity.

A simple and literal rendering of the 'sons of God' as 'angels,' an interpretation supported by other passages of Scripture (Job. i. 6; ii. 1, xxxvii. 7) will give the natural meaning of the passage. We might regard it, then, as a statement that angels actually married earthly women, but it is a truer and more reverent view, we think, to take the passage to be the fragment of a very early Hebrew tradition, which accounted for the giants on the earth as being the offspring of the 'angels' and the 'daughters of men.' It is held by some competent scholars that this fragment in its full form was intended to give another account of the origin of evil, another version of the Fall. From these verses, at any rate, is derived the idea of the fall of the angels from their first estate.

Now we come to the story of the Flood. It is a very old tradition, found in different forms in the records of different nations, but in its highest form in the inspired pages of Genesis. We cannot, so long after the event, tell exactly what took place in detail, but the main facts of the narrative of Genesis are supported by the other traditions. Allowing for what is dramatic and figurative, the substantial truth seems to be that there were great floods, and a great inundation from the rivers Tigris and Euphrates, in the broad region between them, and that all the people were drowned except a few who, guided by God, escaped in a ship. When the inundation subsided, those in the ship found the rest of the people and the animals drowned. That the Flood was local and not universal seems manifest, for, as has been well said by a great scholar, 'so vast an accumulation of water would be in itself an impossibility. To the authors of the tradition of the Flood preserved in Genesis the valleys of the Euphrates and Tigris, the region of Mesopotamia,

was the world, the only world they knew, and to this world the Flood was probably confined.

Taken in this sense, as a tremendous local inundation, there is no reason to question the historic character of the event. Experience teaches us more and more that there is a substantial basis of truth at the foundation of traditions far less circumstantial and probable than the tradition of the flood in the Bible. It may reasonably be supposed that this tradition of the flood was brought by Abraham from his Mesopotamian home, for of late years it has become clear that the Assyro-Babylonian account of the deluge was not derived from Jewish sources, but represented an ancient Mesopotamian tradition, in which Hasisatra or Xisuthros occupied the place of Noah. The most probable explanation of the relationship of the Hebrew and Assyro-Babylonian traditions is that they are both derived from a primitive and prehistoric Semitic original. The Assyro-Babylonian version of the Flood story is steeped in polytheism and superstition. The Hebrew version breathes the purest monotheism. The Flood is God's judgment on man for his gross disregard of the moral law, and the preservation of Noah is the reward of righteousness, and saves not only himself but his family. A careful comparison of the Hebrew and the Babylonian versions of the ancient story of the Flood will show again, as in the story of Creation and the story of Paradise and the Fall, the essential nature of Biblical inspiration, which is concerned with the religious element in experience and life. Not only in the great prophets, though in them chiefly, is God's inspiration to be found in the Bible. The God who is 'of purer eyes than to behold iniquity,' whose tender mercies are everlasting and over all His works, is seen in the first chapters of the Bible, the early narratives of Genesis, inspiring His Hebrew worshippers to shape the old traditions which their fathers had brought from beyond the Euphrates into imperishable instruments for conveying spiritual and moral truth, which are shown, moreover, to be one and inseparable.

Let us turn to the account in the Bible.

In Genesis vi. verse 5, we read: 'And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. . . . Noah was a just man and perfect

in his generations (*i.e.*, among his contemporaries), and Noah walked with God. And Noah begat three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence . . . and God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch' (bitumen). The Lord gave Noah exact particulars how he was to build this ark with a door, and a window, and three storeys. That may be taken to mean the truth that God, who gives all knowledge, gave to men the knowledge of shipbuilding in general, and of the building of the ark, which was a strangely shaped ship, in particular.

Our Book continues: 'Behold I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and everything that is in the earth shall die. But with thee will I establish my covenant.' Covenant means an agreement made by promise on God's part to Noah, but conditional on his performance of his duty to God. God says: 'Thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy son's wives with thee. And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark, to keep them alive with thee; they shall be male and female. Of fowls after their kind, and of cattle after their kind, of every creeping thing of the earth after his kind, two of every sort shall come unto thee; to keep them alive. And take thou unto thee of all food that is eaten, and thou shalt gather it to thee; and it shall be food for thee and for them. Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he.'

For forty days and nights God caused it to rain upon the earth . . . 'all the fountains of the great deep broke up, and the windows of heaven were opened . . . the waters increased, and bare up the ark, and it was lift up above the earth . . . and the ark went upon the face of the waters. And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered. . . . And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man; all in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died. . . . Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark. And the waters prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty days. And God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle

that was with him in the ark; and God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters assuaged.' This means, the waters diminished. The waters went down; the rain left off; the flood abated; and the ark rested upon the mountains of Ararat—*i.e.*, Armenia, north of Lake Van. Observe, God not only remembered and preserved men but animals in the ark—an example of His universal care for His creatures.

Genesis viii. verse 6: 'Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made; And he sent forth a raven, which went forth to and fro, until the waters were dried up from off the earth. Also he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground. But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark, for the waters were on the face of the whole earth; then he put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark. And he stayed yet other seven days; and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark; And the dove came in to him in the evening; and, lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf pluckt off: so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth. And he stayed yet other seven days; and sent forth the dove; which returned not again unto him any more. And it came to pass in the six hundredth and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried up from off the earth: and Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and, behold, the face of the ground was dry.'

And God spake unto Noah, saying, Go forth of the ark, thou and thy wife, and thy sons, and thy sons' wives with thee. Bring forth with thee every living thing that is with thee, of all flesh, both of fowl and of the cattle, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, that they may breed abundantly in the earth, and be fruitful and multiply upon the earth. . . . And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord and offered burnt offerings on the altar.'

Up to now we have said nothing about the structure of the Flood-story in the Bible. Just as there are two accounts of the Creation, so there are two versions here of the story of the Flood. The two accounts are closely interwoven, but can be easily traced out. The cause of the Flood is different in the two accounts. In the one account the Flood is caused by rain alone, in the other by 'the fountains of the great deep' being broken up, as well as by the 'windows of heaven being opened.' A still more definite difference is found in the duration of the Flood; in the one account it is sixty-eight days, in the other it is over a year, one hundred and

fifty days of which the Flood continued to rise and increase. Yet it is quite evident these differences are only two versions of the one story, which is intimately connected with the Babylonian story of the Flood.

Noah offered sacrifices with heartfelt thanksgivings to the Lord for his wonderful preservation. And the Lord said in His heart, 'I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake . . . neither will I again smite any more everything living, as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease. And God blessed Noah and his sons,' and the blessing was 'Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.' They were to have the lordship over the animal creation. They might eat flesh but not with the blood, the blood being regarded as the seat of the life, too sacred to be eaten, but to be offered to God before man ate the flesh.

Genesis ix. verse 8: 'Behold I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you. . . . And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you, and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud. . . . And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: And I will remember my covenant . . . and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.'

Whenever we look upon the rainbow stretching out of heaven and reaching to earth, we ought to remember that God is keeping watch and fulfilling His promise. Of course, there were rainbows from the very beginning, long before man was created—long before the Flood in Mesopotamia. But God spoke in the depth of Noah's soul, and made Noah see in the rainbow a token of the covenant or agreement between God and man. The original means: 'I have set my bow in the cloud' (R.V. marg.).

Thus the Bible account of the Flood represents it as sent by God for the punishment of the great wickedness of the human race. It is sent in judgment, it is withdrawn in mercy. And so God's dealings with Noah reveal the fact that the righteous man is never deserted, but is delivered by Him out of all his troubles. Moreover, the fatherly goodwill, and the gracious friendliness with which God regards all mankind, find an appropriate symbol in the rainbow, which the sun lights up in a cloudy sky when a storm is passing away, reminding the devout mind of God's returning favour after the storm of His just displeasure is over. It was not chiefly to preserve the memory of the Flood that the story of Noah was

written. Rather, the writer or writers who composed the account in Genesis were inspired by God to use the ancient record of the Flood, to stamp upon the minds of the Israelites some of the essential truths of their religion. The first of these truths is undoubtedly the nature of God, Who appears in the Biblical story of the Flood as the One God of heaven and earth, Who punishes man and forgives and brings down to the ground and raises up again, and has always, whether He appears for judgment or for salvation, the purpose of love towards man whom He made in His image, after His likeness. Contrast with the great dignity, the unchanging holiness, the abiding goodwill of the God of Noah, the pettiness, the petulance, the cowardice of the swarms of greedy gods whose disputes fill the Assyro-Babylonian version of the Flood-story. Contrast the pure arbitrariness, the absence of any appreciation of righteousness, in the attitude of the Babylonian deities towards man, with the Hebrew God's attitude towards Noah, who found grace in His sight because he was a supremely righteous man. 'Noah was a righteous man and perfect in his generations' (among his contemporaries), 'and Noah walked with God' (*i.e.*, in companionship with God), a statement made also of Enoch, of whom it is added that 'he was not, for God took him,' which the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews interprets as recording his translation to heaven like Elijah, as the result of a holy life.

Nimrod, 'a mighty hunter before God,' is described in Genesis x. as having Babel, that is Babylon, as his capital, and thence colonising Assyria and building Nineveh. There are various theories as to who he was. [By some students he is identified with Gilgamesh, the hero of the great mythological epic which contains the Babylonian Flood-story. According to another theory Nimrod is Merodach, regarded as a mighty hunter by the Babylonians.

The story of the Tower of Babel, *i.e.*, Gate of God, is the last of the interesting prehistoric traditions which fill the first eleven chapters of the Book of Genesis. It tells of an attempt to build in the land of Shinar, *i.e.*, Babylonia, 'a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven.' This probably means the building of an unusually high ziggurat, or Babylonian temple tower. By some it is supposed to have been the celebrated temple tower in Borsippa, the ruins of which form the mound called Birs Nimroud; by others it is identified with the famous seven-storied tower of Merodach, in Babylon, which Nebuchadnezzar restored. This tower was built in prehistoric times, and its earliest name was Accadian, 'the house of the lofty summit.' It was the principal shrine in Babylon. A ziggurat, it may be explained, was a mas-

sive pyramidal tower, ascending in stage-like terraces, with a temple at the top. The story seems to be intended to account for the division of men into different races and languages. As usual with all these Biblical prehistoric stories, the religious lesson is quite true. Pride and self-exaltation then, as now, brought down on men the condemnation of God. The impious attempt to establish human unity without the co-operation of the true God proved, according to the Hebrew reading of the old story, a complete failure.

We have now finished the first eleven chapters of the book of Genesis, the first portion of the Bible, which occupies a place by itself, dealing, as it does, with the prehistoric period, and giving an account of the Creation of the universe, and of man's early history on the earth, unique in its inspiration from a religious point of view. As we go on with the reading of the Bible we shall find that the Revelation or self-unveiling of God which has already begun in these chapters, is a progressive Revelation of Himself which meets religious difficulties as they arise and supplies their solution. The form so far throughout this prehistoric period has been that of narrative, a form innately dear to the Eastern heart and habits of thought.

In the great religious pictures of the Creation narrative, God reveals Himself through the inspired writer, as pre-existent, omnipotent, a hater of sin, a lover of mankind, and in particular of that righteousness in mankind which is the true life of a man. In the same narratives man is revealed as made by God in His own image and likeness, and man is seen to be made a living soul, because of that precious thing, the life of God, breathed into him by the Creator. This gift of God, not only the lower power of physical life, but the higher power of intellectual, moral, and spiritual life, enables man to enter into communion with God, and to live in a measure God's life. All this belongs to the deep things of religion and is profoundly true. Then, again we read, in the form of a poetic word-picture, how man once innocent, became conscious of the moral law, and became conscious of it only to break it. The whole story of the Fall is remarkable not only for its revelation of God, but for its insight into the psychology of man. In the story of the Fall a great hope is left to man in the fact that God does not forsake him after the Fall, but to hearten him in the struggle with temptation gives him the sure promise of the Protevangelium, the ultimate victory over evil of the woman's seed in Christ. Once more the terrible power of

heredity, the inherited propensity for evil, is shown in Cain, and in the story of the Flood, God's wrath towards sin and mercy towards mankind are portrayed in the experience of Noah, while the story of the tower of Babel shows how God regards insolent pride and self-seeking in man. In the whole of this first portion of Genesis, God appears as a gracious, generous, and loving Creator, and a just and merciful judge.

At this point we may say a few words on the value of the whole book of Genesis, as indeed of the whole Old Testament, as a means of teaching morality to the young, and teaching it as practical religion. The Eastern is the prince of story-tellers, and Genesis in particular and the Old Testament in general teach by stories, the very best means for teaching children. Genesis, moreover, even beyond the other Old Testament books, has an atmosphere of its own, the atmosphere of God, which of itself is invaluable as stimulating the moral and spiritual growth of the child. The moral teaching of the Old Testament is never dull, and no one takes it in more readily than the child. Childhood is obviously the time to learn the moral law, for the fullest good effects of obedience to the moral law are only to be had by beginning in childhood the self-mastery which is the secret of the right life. In the hands of competent teachers, of parents in the home, and masters and mistresses in the school, the Old Testament remains the very best practical handbook for the teaching of morals to boy or girl, and it is hoped that these simple readings and explanations of the Bible may be a help and encouragement to parents, and even to school-teachers to bring home the life-giving contents of the Bible to the children in their charge.

It was the Old Testament of which St. Paul wrote to Timothy that it was given by inspiration of God 'that he man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.' The effect on the moral life is one of the best tests of true inspiration, and the Old Testament emerges triumphantly from this test, in the case of adults as well as in the case of children. The Bible (the New Testament, of course, but not without the Old) is God's chief instrument for the education of the world in that which is most important, the power of the righteous life. The regular reading of the Bible and a practical knowledge of its contents have formed the character of the English-speaking race in the past and are needed to continue it in the future. We cannot live without ideals, 'but the Bible,' says Bishop Westcott, 'not only offers to us an ideal of service and sympathy and fellowship, of love to God and man, which answers to the noblest aspirations of

all men, but also supplies us with a motive to seek it and power to approach it, the sense of Christ's love for us, and the sense of Christ's presence.'

We have more than once referred to the fact that in the stories of prehistoric times in the early chapters of Genesis there is a remarkable resemblance to Assyro-Babylonian traditions which have been found in cuneiform inscriptions and deciphered very successfully of late years. How is this resemblance to be explained? 'On the assumption,' says Bishop Ryle, 'of derivation from an ultimately common source in the religious mythology of Mesopotamia. The original tradition,' he says, 'marred with the intricacies of a bewildering polytheism, was received from their Mesopotamian ancestors by the founders of the Israelite branch of the Semitic race.' We have accepted this view, and ascribed the bringing of these prehistoric stories from Mesopotamia to Canaan to Abraham, the historic father of the Hebrew race. When Abraham left Haran and crossed the Euphrates, he left behind him a people who, including his own kindred, worshipped many gods, and he himself, it is evident, was the faithful worshipper of the one God. What more natural than that Abraham's monotheism should begin at an early date to purify and spiritualise the popular Creation traditions of his people, though it was no doubt only after many centuries that the compiler gave those traditions their present Biblical form. In support of this view these words may be quoted from Joshua's last address. Joshua xxiv. 2: 'And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus said the Lord God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nachor; and they served other gods. And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan' ('the other side of the flood' is in the Revised Version, from beyond the river,' that is, the Euphrates).

It may be added that the fact that the Hebrew traditions seem to have come ultimately from Mesopotamia is a strong corroboration of the trustworthiness of the Biblical account of the origin of the Hebrews, which states that Abraham, in his earlier life, lived in that region in Ur of the Chaldees and Haran, and came from that region to Canaan, and that in the marriage of his son Isaac, and of his grandson Jacob, a close connection was kept up with his Babylonian kindred, who appear to have remained polytheists, to judge from the teraphim or little images which Rachel stole from Laban, when Jacob was returning from Haran to Canaan, and which Laban called 'my gods,' both Rachel and Laban evidently regarding them as household gods.

CHAPTER III.

GENESIS XII.—XXXVII. (THE HISTORY OF THE PATRIARCHS).

GENESIS as we have seen, and as the name signifies, is the book of Origins. We have had the origins of the world and of man pictured in poetic visions, the early narratives of which we have been reading, and now we are coming to the origin of the Hebrew race and nation.

God is invisible to our bodily eyes, and He seeks to reveal Himself, His Presence, and His Nature, to our spiritual eyes. Without this Revelation (that is to say, unveiling) we should not know God. The knowledge of God is the most important thing in our lives, for this alone can give us true knowledge of ourselves as made in the image of God, and this alone can teach us the secret of how to live the best life here, and the best life here is the necessary stepping-stone to the best life hereafter.

How does God reveal Himself to us? In many ways—through Nature, through History, and chiefly through the moral and spiritual part of man, which is moved by an inward voice. This our religion teaches us to recognise as the Holy Spirit. The crown and climax of this last Self-Revelation of God, to which all the other Revelations point and in which they are united and completed, is the Revelation God has given in Jesus Christ.

Have you ever heard a voice in the depth of your heart warning you to give up what is bad, urging you to aim at what is good? It is a still small voice like that which spoke to the prophet Elijah on Mount Horeb, and you need close attention to catch its accents within you, and willing obedience to what it tells you, in order that you may gain the power of hearing it more readily and more clearly. Just as God reveals Himself to you by this inward Voice, so He revealed Himself to the men whose experience of His revelation is recorded in the Bible. The difference is that the record is written by Easterns, and very commonly thrown into poetic or dramatic form. Those who heard the inward Voice communicated their experience to others, and helped others to listen to the Voice, and to recognise it when heard, and to obey it. Such experiences are open to all mankind, but only a few have made a really full use of their opportunities;

that is to say, only a few have the seeing mind, and can interpret what they see.

In one part of the world, thousands of years ago, a man heard this Voice more clearly and obeyed it more faithfully than other men. That part of the world was known as Aram Naharaim, *i.e.*, Aram of the two Rivers, from being the land of the two great rivers, Euphrates and Tigris, and the particular part of this region in which he heard the Voice was called Haran. Haran was in those times a place of importance, situated on the left bank of the Belikh, a tributary of the Euphrates, and, of course, on the far side of the Euphrates from Palestine. It is often mentioned in Assyrian inscriptions, and also by later writers. To-day a long range of ruins marks the site of the place where the great historical Revelation of the Bible began. As far as learned men can fix the date, it was about 2250 B.C. when this man determined to obey the Voice of the invisible God in his inmost soul, and obeyed it so faithfully, and at such a cost, that he has been ever since acknowledged as the Father of the Faithful. All round him his friends and kindred worshipped many gods, of which the Moon-god was the chief, known as Baal-Haran, or the Lord of Haran; while teraphim, or little household gods, were, as we know, much-prized possessions in his grand-nephew Laban's household.

This man's faithfulness to God, whose Voice he hears in his inmost soul, enabled him to receive trustfully the revelation of God, that there is only one God—not many, as his neighbours supposed—and that no image can represent Him rightly; that to listen to His Voice attentively and obey it dutifully is the whole religious duty of man.

Who was this man? His name was Abraham, a man of pure Semitic race, dwelling, as we have seen, in Haran. His life and steadfast character are vividly pictured for us in the Book of Genesis. When the Voice of God called him, it called him to make great sacrifices, for he was ordered to leave his home and his kindred, and to go into a strange land to make a new home there, where he might worship the Unseen God by listening to, and obeying His Voice, without any image or representation to make that worship easier. Whose was the voice that Abraham heard? The Voice of the Unseen God Jehovah (Yahweh), which means, 'He is what He is,' or, 'He will be what He will be,' in holiness, mercy, love, and the rest of the Divine attributes. In Exodus iii, 14, the name is given in the first person, 'I am that I am,' the One and Only God, the unchanging and omnipotent Spirit,

most commonly called Jehovah in the Old Testament; called the Lord in our English Bible.

This mysterious and only true God spoke to Abraham and called him to a higher destiny, which was to be worked out by Abraham's obedience to Jehovah's Voice—obedience to be rendered in the teeth of difficulties, and to be persisted in at any cost.

What did the Voice of Jehovah say to Abraham? (Turn to Genesis xii. 1.) 'Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, into a land that I will shew thee. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing, and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee, and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.' The command was a plain one, but obedience was difficult. Most men would not have trusted the guiding of the Voice, but Abraham made the venture of faith without doubt and without hesitation. With rare conciseness and dignity the Book of Genesis tells what took place (Genesis xii. 4). 'So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran. And Abram took Sarai, his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance which they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran, and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan, and into the land of Canaan they came.'

How much is conveyed, what a series of pictures is unfolded in the narrow limits of the last seven words! The crossing of the Euphrates at Carchemish, sixty miles west of Haran, and the turning due south across the desert past Hamath and Damascus; then the climbing of the south spurs of Mount Hermon if the entry to Canaan was made from the north, or if the entry was made on the east of Canaan the journey down the long Jordan valley, the crossing of the river at a ford near the Dead Sea, and the journey to Shechem, where we read in the next verse Abraham arrived (Genesis xxi. 6), 'And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Shechem . . . and there builded he an altar unto the Lord.' The Voice of Jehovah had called for a great sacrifice, but promised a great reward; that not only should Abraham be blessed, but a blessing to others, to men yet unborn, and nations not yet come into being; that this blessing should come to them through a knowledge of the only true God. 'I will bless thee, and be thou a blessing, and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.' (Genesis xii. 2.) This was a foreshadowing to Abraham of the coming of Him who was after-

wards expected through long centuries by Abraham's descendants as the Messiah, who came at last, the greatest of all God's Blessings to mankind, and whom we worship to-day as 'God with us,' our Lord Jesus Christ.

Abraham (who is called Abram up to Genesis xvii. 5, when God changed his name to Abraham in pledge of the fulfilment of the Promise) was the father of the Hebrews—the family that grew into a clan, afterwards into a tribe, and finally into a nation, God's dealings with which constitute the main body of the historical Revelation of the Bible. Who were the Hebrews? Abraham's family and household, and the name Hebrews probably signifies that they had 'come across' from the other side of the flood, that is, of the great river Euphrates. It may possibly signify their descent from an ancestor named Eber. We must not think of a family of those days as a few persons, but as a community, consisting of Abraham himself, the chief, and Sarai, the chief's wife, and his nephew Lot, and large numbers of household slaves. Some years afterwards, when Abraham had been a long time in Canaan, Lot was taken prisoner by Chedorlaomer, King of Elam, and Amraphel, King of Shinar (whose names we find in inscriptions on Babylonian monuments, archæology fully supporting the historical character of the narratives of Genesis), and 'one escaped,' we read (Genesis xiv. 13), 'and told Abraham the Hebrew,' and Abraham 'led forth his trained men, born in his house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued as far as Dan,' and probably by a night surprise brought back the prisoners and booty from Hobab to the north of Damascus. This large force of fighting men gives some idea of the size of Abraham's house, or rather, we should say household, for he had no house. He and his household, surrounded by great multitudes of flocks and herds, to find pasturage for which they had to journey from place to place, lived in large goatskin tents, each with several rooms, just as the wandering Arabs do now.

The encounter with King Amraphel, who is now identified with Hammurabi, the sixth king of the first Babylonian dynasty, reminds us of the discovery of the code of laws of Hammurabi by the French explorers at Susa, a code which reveals a long-established and highly developed civilisation at Babylon; and it is probable that both code and civilisation were known to Abraham when he dwelt in Ur and Haran, and afterwards in Canaan.

So they wandered on, seeking the promised land where they might settle down and worship the One True God, and obey His inward Voice that spoke and continued to speak to their chief.

Abraham had given up a settled life among his kindred in Haran to be alone with God; to become God's instrument in training a people for His own possession, devoted exclusively to His service, attentive to hear His Voice, and zealous to obey it in everything. Out of Abraham's family, the first Hebrews, the Hebrew tribes and Hebrew nation were to grow, and God's dealings with them were to be the Revelation of Himself, here a little and there a little as they were able to receive it. It was to be a progressive Revelation to them. They were to advance as children in a school do, from lesser knowledge to fuller knowledge, till at last the preparation was complete, and the perfect Revelation of God was given in One, to see whom was to see God, our Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

To the men of his time Abraham seemed only a wandering Aramean or Syrian chief in search of good pasturage for his flocks, brave and successful in a small way. But as God could see then, and we, after the event, can see now, he carried in his breast the highest fortunes of mankind, the faith in the unseen and holy God, the obedience to the inward Voice which was the foundation on which the Jewish Church was built, and in due time, its successor, the Christian Church, also.

The Jewish Christians of the first century looked back and claimed the faith of their Father Abraham as their own, and felt that they were realising in Christ the possession of the blessing promised to Abraham so long before. The revelation in the first half of the Bible, which is called the Old 'Testament' (or more properly 'Covenant') is the continuous record of the dealings of God with the descendants of Abraham, through which, when the fulness of time was come, He was to have still more wonderful dealings with all mankind.

Before we consider the chief events of Abraham's life, let us remember what precious gifts his faith in God brought us and all the human race, when he left, at God's command, his home in Haran and became a wanderer on the face of the earth. His first and greatest gift was faith in the vision of the unseen God, perceived in the inward Voice, and the duty of unquestioning obedience to its accents, which we have already spoken about. He also very probably brought a rich body of religious stories picturing the prehistoric life of man which were apparently the common property of himself and his relations and neighbours in Aram Naharaim. These stories were handed down possibly by oral tradition (or they may have been written on Babylonian clay tablets) through Abraham's descendants, till at last, purified by a

firm faith in the one and only God, which had deepened through long centuries of experience, they were written down in the form in which they are familiar to us, seemingly a compilation of a number of earlier written documents.

These religious stories have been already examined by us, for they are the earlier narratives of Genesis, ending in the story of the tower of Babel or Babylon in Genesis xi.

One thing more we owe to Abraham, and his trust in God's guidance that sent him across the Euphrates to found the Hebrew race. In founding the Hebrew race, he secured for mankind that product of the Hebrew race, the greatest of books, or rather collections of books, the greatest of teachers of justice and love—the Bible. The father of the Hebrew race is also in a very real sense the father of the Bible. How unconscious that his name would be revered for all these good gifts was the Syrian chief when he crossed the Euphrates more than 4000 years ago! Nothing remains now of Babylon, the great city of Abraham's native land; but Abraham's religion, his faith in one God, who speaks to man, whom man is bound to obey, has come to be, in its final form of the Christian religion, the religion of the foremost nations of the modern world. The Bible—the Book which Abraham's descendants wrote long after—is full of his name; and thanks to the Book, the faith of Abraham is known, and the name of Abraham revered, in all lands wherever the work of the Christian Church is carried on, as well as by Mohammedans and Jews. If we realise these facts, we must feel that, while life is full of wonders, full of miracles, not the least wonderful things are those that have flowed from that Aramean chief's momentous decision to be loyal to God and obey His voice, whatever sacrifice might be involved in such obedience.

And now we turn to the Bible and read what the book of Genesis has to tell us of the rest of Abraham's life. Genesis xii. verse 4: 'So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran . . . and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan . . . and passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. . . . And the Lord appeared unto Abram and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the Lord. . . . And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent . . . and there he builded an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord. And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the south. And there

sacrifice we lay at the foot of the Cross. All of us ought to see how necessary it is that we should try our hardest to do our best. Such is the true aim and object of our life on earth.

We return to Jacob. God put it into his heart to become a better man. He had had his ladder-dream, which was indeed most beautiful. We have better still. To-day we understand that Christ, the Lord, is our Ladder. He is the Mediator between our Heavenly Father and ourselves. He unites the earth with heaven. Let us never separate our two Testaments. Every beautiful vision and revelation that the Lord, in His mercy, gave to the people we read about in the Old Testament, has a parallel, more beautiful by far, in the New Testament. The Old Testament gives us the promise, the New the fulfilment, even Christ Himself. After the dream that Jacob had, we read of his wandering on; we are told of another well, and how he there saw an uncle of his named Laban, after he had met a daughter of his, called Rachel. Jacob rolled away the stone from the well's mouth, and drew the water for the sheep to drink. Jacob and Rachel talked together, and after he had kissed Rachel he told her he was Rebekah's son, and Laban hearing the tidings came up and embraced his nephew. Laban and Jacob arranged that the latter should serve the former, and work for him for seven years, in return for which work Jacob should be allowed to take Rachel as his wife.

We remember how Jacob had deceived his father. Now we shall see how the tables were turned, and how Jacob, in his turn, was deceived by his uncle. When we do wrong, sooner or later we have to suffer for it. Jacob was not spared the bitter lesson. To his cost he had to learn it. At the end of seven years, after Jacob had done his duty by Laban, his uncle deceived him and gave him the ugly, tender-eyed Leah, instead of the beautiful Rachel. Nothing remained for Jacob to do but to agree to serve Laban for a second term of seven years in order to receive Rachel at once, which he did. Jacob returned to Mamre, in time to see his father Isaac there before he died, and Jacob and Esau, his sons, buried him. On Jacob's way home, he and Esau had made up their long-standing quarrel.

CHAPTER IV.

GENESIS xxxvii. TO EXODUS xv. 22 (THE HISTORY OF THE PATRIARCHS—MOSES AND THE STORY OF THE EXODUS).

AFTER thirty years' absence, Jacob had, as we have seen, returned to Canaan to his old father Isaac, in time to be with him when he died, and had buried him in the cave of Machpelah.

Genesis xxxvii. verse 1: 'And Jacob dwelt in the land wherein his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan.'

Joseph and Benjamin were sons of Jacob and Rachel—Joseph born in Padan-aram, Benjamin at Ephrath, or Bethlehem, on the way home, when Rachel died in giving him birth.

Joseph was his father's favourite and a spoilt child, and in consequence, during childhood and early youth, though otherwise an exemplary character, was a little of a talebearer and boaster. When Joseph was seventeen years old, we hear of his feeding the flock, and having a coat of many colours which he always wore. He used to have dreams which he spoke of to his brethren, and they mocked him and were jealous of him, for his dreams were of his own exaltation over the rest of the family.

Now it happened that all his brothers were wandering about in search of pasturage, feeding their father's flocks; we read of them as being first near Shechem, and then at Dothan. Joseph was sent out by his father from the vale of Hebron after them to ascertain if all was well with them and the cattle, and he was to come back and report. When the brothers saw Joseph approach, they conspired to slay him, and said one to another: Behold this dreamer cometh.' They cast him into a pit by the advice of Reuben, who wished to save Joseph from death and intended to restore him to his father again. A party or caravan bearing spices and balm and myrrh from Gilead to Egypt on camels, all in single file, one beast tied to another, were passing by, forming one long, continuous, winding line, as with slow and stately gait they wended their way through the varying country, now in the plain, now along the mountain sides.

Genesis xxxvii. verse 28: 'There passed by Midianites merchantmen, and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty pieces of silver, and they brought Joseph into Egypt.'

His wicked brothers had stripped Joseph of his coat of many colours. They killed a goat and dipped the coat in the blood; they took the coat home and brought it to their father, and asked if the coat were Joseph's. The poor father recognised it at once, and said, 'It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him.' How could he fathom the extent of their wickedness? What reason had he to suspect? He mourned his son's supposed death for many a day, as though it had really taken place. Look at the poor old man in our picture, looking up towards heaven, the grief and anguish in his heart expressed in his face.

Genesis xxxvii. 35: 'And he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning.'

Now we are most anxious to hear what followed. All this time Joseph was not dead, but alive. Events come about in a wonderful way. A wicked deed had been done on earth. God Almighty was near to will and to bring it about, that intended wickedness should result in good. He loved and protected Joseph, and had a purpose for Joseph to fulfil. People are absolutely powerless to harm others, even if they try, when it is against the Lord's will. We see this times out of number; the Bible tells us this, and our own lives also prove this very often, if we have eyes to see.

We see the destiny of Joseph gradually working itself out, as we see the purpose of God fulfilling itself in the vicissitudes of his early life. The Ishmeelites, with their long line of camels, travelled along towards Egypt, probably by way of Joppa, Gaza, and Zoan, which was the first station in Egypt. Joseph was sold a second time, and his purchaser's name was Potiphar, who was the captain of the bodyguard of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt.

The Lord did not desert Joseph. We must not forget this. The Egyptians saw that Joseph was a good, conscientious young man; that he worked well and diligently; and thus very soon we find him promoted and made an overseer, or house steward, over his master's house, one who was trusted and honoured by everybody he had dealings with. Potiphar had a wicked wife. Joseph was tempted by her and repulsed the temptation saying, in words that are still an example to us when assailed by temptation, 'How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?' Thereupon she brought a false accusation against Joseph. Her husband believed her, and was very angry with Joseph. He ought to have known better, and to have judged Joseph according to his proved trustworthiness. So now Joseph was cast into prison by his indignant master.

The book of Genesis, which we are still reading, tells us that the

gaoler of the prison was kind to him. Perhaps the idea comes to us, how strange it is that the Lord should allow Joseph to be cast into prison, because He, being Almighty, and loving Joseph, might have saved him from undergoing this unjust treatment. But we cannot see all that God sees. We see in part, He sees the whole of everything. We see the beginning, He sees the end from the beginning. It was God's wish that Joseph should be made to suffer imprisonment; and we shall be told the reason why almost immediately. In prison it happened that two fellow-prisoners with Joseph, servants of Pharaoh (king of Egypt), the chief butler or cupbearer, and the chief baker, had remarkable dreams. We remember that Joseph had already, from boyhood, the gift from God of discerning the meaning of dreams. In this case he was able to tell these two men everything concerning their respective dreams. Joseph's interpretation turned out marvelously true.

Two years after, Pharaoh, in his palace, dreamed disquieting dreams. He wished to know what they meant. All his wise men and magicians failed to explain them. The king was sore perplexed. One of the king's servants from the prison, the cupbearer, had been released, and restored to favour as Joseph predicted, and was back again in his old place serving the king. Suddenly the cup-bearer thought of Joseph, and proposed that he should be sent for, and the king decided to have him fetched out of prison and brought to his palace. Trusting in God, Joseph stood in the king's presence. 'It is not in me,' he said modestly and truly. 'God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace.' (Genesis xli. verse 16).

God gave to Joseph the meaning of the dreams, and he told it to the king. He foretold that there would be seven years of plenty in the land, followed by seven years of famine. It was the Lord who put all wisdom into Joseph's heart and head. Here was the reason of God letting him be put into prison. What had seemed his greatest misfortune had turned out his greatest blessing. His imprisonment led up to his success in life. It does not do for us to be impatient, nor always to be expecting to know at once the reason why. We are meant to accept trustfully God's wishes and decrees. In His own good time he will enable us to see the reason. The king had need of a clever person to look after the affairs of his state and country. He realised that he could do no better than appoint Joseph, who had the spirit of God in him. Thus he became second in the land, the next man in importance to Pharaoh himself.

Genesis xli. verse 41: 'And Pharaoh said unto Joseph: See, I

as to let a father kill his own son. What the Lord did wish to ascertain was, whether Abraham's love for his Creator was the thing uppermost in his heart. God is Love. The God of Love is never cruel. Abraham was tried and found not to be wanting. We read about Abraham that he believed the Lord, and that this was counted to him for righteousness. Oh! for the same to be said of us when the Lord thinks fit to try our love for Him. The result of the tempting or testing of Abraham was that human sacrifices, which were very common in Canaan, were seen by him and by his descendants not to be acceptable to God and were therefore abandoned.

In Genesis xxii. verse 13, we read how a ram was substituted for a human sacrifice: 'And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son. And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.'

We have seen Abraham's obedience, and the Lord's mercy. The Lord blessed Abraham to the end of his days. Among the blessings was the success of Abraham in the night attack already referred to on Chedorlaomer and the three other kings, from whom he rescued their prisoners, his nephew Lot, and the booty of Sodom. We are told how Sarah died, and how Abraham bought from Ephron the Hittite a field containing the cave of Machpelah to bury her in. Before he died himself he sent out a trusted servant, the elder of his house—that is, the steward—to his own country, Aram Naharaim, to Haran, to fetch back a wife of the pure blood of his own kindred for his son Isaac. At the end of the journey the steward halted at a well, and a beautiful damsel came to water her father's flock. She kindly gave him to drink and watered his camels also.

Here is our picture telling us all about it. Her name was Rebekah, and her father's name was Bethuel, the son of Nahor, Abraham's kinsman. Alone she gave water to Abraham's servants and also to his camels. Abraham's steward accompanied her to the house of her father Bethuel, Abraham's nephew, and remained there for the night. All was arranged, and Rebekah and Laban, her brother, agreed that she should return at once with Abraham's messenger and become Isaac's wife. Abraham's steward gave Rebekah the proper gifts for a betrothal—jewels of silver and gold and raiment. He gave also to her brother and her mother precious things. Her own dear old nurse travelled with

her, and her damsels or maids, all of them riding on camels to the new home that was to be hers.

Genesis xxiv. verse 62: 'Isaac came from the way of the well Lahai-roi; for he dwelt in the south country. And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide: And he lifted up his eyes and saw, and, behold, the camels were coming. And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel. For she had said unto the servant, What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant had said, It is my master: Therefore she took a vail and covered herself. And the servant told Isaac all things that he had done. And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her; and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.'

Rebekah had twin sons, Esau and Jacob. Esau was a hairy man, and Jacob was smooth. Besides being different in appearance, they were also different in character. Esau and Jacob had quite different tastes. Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; Jacob, we are told, was a plain man, a stay-at-home shepherd, dwelling in tents. Isaac loved his son Esau the best; Rebekah, on the other hand, preferred her son Jacob. The story tells us that one day Jacob was preparing some food, boiling red lentils. Esau came home from the chase, tired and hungry. He asked his brother to give him some of the red pottage. Jacob was unkind; he did not give him the food at once. He had a selfish nature, which would not allow him readily to give anything for nothing.

'Look here,' said Jacob to Esau, 'I will give you some food if you will give me something in return.' Not a nice way of doing things, this. Jacob said, 'Take this food, but you must sell me your birthright.' This means, that Jacob wanted to be the eldest brother and come first, before his brother in everything. Esau, being a careless sort of person, not minding this proposal either one way or the other, his sole concern being that he was hungry, wished only to have food and drink, and accepted Jacob's offer. Jacob, at this time of his life, was not by any means a good man; he was a schemer as well as very selfish; he loved crooked ways of getting things for himself. He had to be taught, and to be trained in the way he was to go. Before he died, we see how God, through the discipline of life, taught him his lesson. The Creator knew that there was good in him, which required to be drawn out by the education of experience. God had infinite patience with Jacob. At first the latter failed over and over again; but presently we see him trying hard to overcome his faults.

Isaac, the Patriarch, was now a very old man. His eyes were dim. He felt that he might die any moment; he wished to bless Esau, so he spoke as follows:—

Genesis xxvii. verse 3: 'Now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison; and make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die. And Rebekah heard when Isaac spake to Esau his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt for venison, and to bring it. And Rebekah spake unto Jacob her son, saying, Behold, I heard thy father speak unto Esau thy brother saying, Bring me venison. . . . Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that which I command thee.'

Rebekah instructed her son Jacob how to deceive his father: that he was to go and fetch two good kids and make savoury meat, and bring it to his father, before Esau returned, so as to get the blessing for himself. Rebekah knew that Isaac was so old that he was nearly blind, and she thought that all would be safe, and he would never find out which son stood in front of him. Jacob reminded his mother of the difference in the feel of their skins—Esau was hairy, Jacob smooth. Isaac, being blind, might possibly ask his son to let him feel him. Jacob, perhaps, felt mean at the idea of deceiving a blind man, and that man his own father. Rebekah overcame his scruples. It was bad of both of them: of her, to propose such a base and wicked thing; and of him to do it. The kid was brought. Rebekah cooked the meat; she took some skins of the kids of the goats and put them upon his hands and the smooth of his neck, and sent Jacob into his father's presence. There he passed himself off as Esau, and stole his brother's blessing.

Jacob had been twice his brother's supplanter: first he had stolen away Esau's birthright, and now he had stolen away his blessing. Esau was furious. He wished to kill his brother. Isaac, after all this had happened, counselled Jacob to go into his own country in search of a wife, one of the daughters of Laban, his mother's brother. Rebekah, too, perhaps fearing for her son Jacob's life, on account of Esau's wrath, advised him for the same purpose to leave the country. Thus, having two reasons for leaving home, Jacob decided to flee, and he set out on his long journey to Haran. One night, while resting in the open, he took stones and made himself a pillow of them. It was at Bethel, between Beersheba and Haran. He went to sleep, and the Lord sent him a vision, a most beautiful dream. Genesis xxviii, verse 12:

'And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the

top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham, thy father, and God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of. And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place. This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of Heaven.'

This shows how the consciousness of God's presence, brought home to Jacob by his dream, awakened into active life the consciousness of his own guilt towards his old father and towards his brother Esau. From this consciousness of guilt, and of the presence of a Holy God, we may date the beginning of Jacob's repentance and of his new life.

Verse 18: 'And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. And he called the name of that place Bethel. . . . And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God; and this stone which I have set up for a pillar shall be God's house; and of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto thee.'

What a beautiful and comforting promise Jacob received from the Lord. We have been told that Jacob built an altar and thanked God. Building altars and sacrificing on them is what people used to do in the days of the Patriarchs, in order to show their gratitude to God. In the New Testament, and in our days, we are told to do differently. We are no more required to build an altar of stone. Jesus asks us to give him our willing hearts, whole and undivided. He asks us to love him more than anybody or anything in the world. He has shown us how we are to live. He has given up His life for us, and we are to devote ours to His service. This alone is acceptable. This is what is expected from us who live at the present time. Our hearts are the altar. Our love is the

was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land.'

On account of the famine we read about in the Bible, Abraham went to Egypt in search of food. From Egypt, after a time, the caravan wandered on, leaving without regret the splendour of great cities like Memphis and Thebes for the freedom and hardships of the old, loved, nomad life. We are told how much Abraham had to carry about with him in the way of slaves, and cattle, and silver, and gold—probably, in part, the gifts of the King of Egypt. There was not sufficient food for Abraham's flocks and herds, and for those of Lot, after the return to Canaan, and there arose a strife between the herdmen of Abraham's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle. Abraham, a man of peace and goodwill, said (Genesis xiii, verse 8): 'Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen, for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me; if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left. And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other. 'Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent towards Sodom. But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly.'

Lot was not at all like his uncle Abraham. He was neither religious nor high-minded. He wanted to enjoy himself in a life of self-indulgence. He was satisfied to live an easy-going existence in the very bad company which abounded in Sodom. He gave way to drink. This not only harmed himself, but others, especially his own family, because he set them a bad example.

'And the Lord said unto Abraham, after that Lot was separated from him: Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. . . . Then Abraham removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the Lord.'

Abraham was now brought into contact with different nations and their kings, who lived in those times in that part of the world, and proved himself a just man in all his dealings with them.

After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abraham in a vision. His great wish was fulfilled. When Abraham and Sarah were very old people, a son was born to them whom they called Isaac, which means laughter, because it seemed so laughable that two very old people like Abraham and Sarah should have a child. A son, named Ishmael, had already been born to Abraham by Hagar, his bondwoman. The Lord had given to Abraham the following promise: 'Thou shalt call his name Isaac, and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.'

One day Abraham was sitting at his tent door, when angels came; angels, that is, messengers from the Lord. Look at them in our picture, and Abraham bowing down before them. He received them kindly. He called Sarah out of the tent, asking her to bring food and refreshment. Look at her, standing at the tent door.

Lot also had a vision of angels, but his was not of a pleasant character. The news he received was bad. He was told that the walled towns of Sodom and Gomorrah would be destroyed by fire and brimstone. All came to pass as had been foretold. Lot alone out of all the town, with his two daughters, managed to flee and was saved. His wife, because she disobeyed and looked back at the burning city, was turned into a pillar of salt. That means probably that when the terrible storm broke on Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot's wife, hanging back, was enveloped in a deluge of salt and bitumen. Thus overwhelmed and crusted over with salt, she might be very well called a pillar of salt, as a person covered with snow might fairly be called a pillar of snow. Pinnacles, or pillars of crystallised rock salt, are at times found detached from the mountain of Sodom (Jebel Usdom), a vast salt cliff on the margin of the Dead Sea. We can picture to ourselves the whole scene; Lot fleeing for dear life, his wife petrified in the storm of salt which swept over her and covered her.

To return to Abraham. We now read of the time when the Lord thought fit to try his faith. This time comes to all of us. I wonder how you and I will behave. We will now hear how Abraham stood the test, and we learn a lesson, let us hope, from his splendid example. God is a jealous God, and He expects to be the first with us. The Lord commanded Abraham to sacrifice his own beloved son, Isaac. In olden days and among all the people of Canaan and the neighbourhood, it had been the custom to sacrifice human beings as well as animals. In our time we are aghast to think such a thing was possible. Such an idea

as the sacrifice of his son could have been no shock to Abraham; for a son was not considered as a separate and responsible being in those days, but a part of his father, and to sacrifice a son was looked on by every one as equivalent to a father's sacrifice of himself.

The reason of this testing of Abraham was, that it was a foreshadowing of a great event, for since these days of the Old Testament the greatest event in the world has taken place. Our Lord Jesus Christ has been born into the world, and has suffered and died on the Cross for our sakes. He is the One and Only complete Sacrifice. He alone can save our souls. He died and rose in order that we might live. This our Heavenly Father ordained. This our Lord and Savior carried out. Can any one of us fathom the love of God?—the love of Jesus Christ for us, God's sinful children?

Our Book tells us, Genesis xxii.: 'And it came to pass after these things that God did tempt Abraham. . . . And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clove the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up and went unto the place of which God had told him. Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass, and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again unto you. And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together. And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering. So they went both of them together. And they came to the place which God had told him of. And Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took a knife to slay his son. And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I.'

Abraham, as we know, loved his son more than any visible being in the world, but Abraham loved the unseen Lord the best of all, and therefore he was ready to face this supreme test of his willingness to do His Maker's Will. It is of no use in this life to give anything which gives us no trouble, be it to God or to our

fellow-creatures. We will try and make this clear. Supposing we happen to have many toys and many books. Out of our plenty we make a friend a present. We do not mind at all if we keep or part with one or the other of most of the many things we possess. We shall never miss them. On the other hand, there is one particular thing which we prize very much indeed. Now, if we part with our favorite treasure, there is at once quite a different feeling in us. We become better by the sacrificing of ourselves. It improves our character, and we climb a rung higher on the ladder of life.

Suppose you have a canary-bird, such a dear, little, bright, yellow songster. Round the corner, in a street where houses are high, and hardly any sunshine ever manages to penetrate the gloom, and sad people cannot easily be cheered up, and are too poor to live elsewhere, there just exists a poor blind boy. He cannot go out into the fields, nobody has any time to help him, and the green fields are too far away. He never hears the joyous birds singing nor sees the blue sky. How great would be his pleasure, had he your canary-bird. This idea strikes you. You go and visit him, and bring him your treasure.

You miss your bird badly, but this feeling gives place to another, and you begin to experience real satisfaction. Something tells you (I am sure it is our old friend Conscience, yes, indeed, it is no other) that you have done well. You have thought more of somebody else than of yourself. In this case you have thought of a poor child less favoured than yourself. Another time it will make you think of giving up more important things to please God. Now do you follow me, and see that God did not speak only to Abraham, but speaks also to each one of us? The Lord sees the blind boy's pleasure, and your little gift is acceptable to your Heavenly Father because you have tried to please one of His creatures. We realise that it must be only the best of everything we have to give, which is good enough to offer to the Lord. What can any little sacrifice of ours ever be, compared to the sacrifice made by Jesus Christ for us.

When Abraham had prepared everything, the angel of the Lord appeared out of heaven. And what blessed news did the angel bring? What a surprise! This was the message from God to Abraham (Genesis xxii. verse 12): 'Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing that thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.'

It was not the kind Lord's intention to do so terrible a thing

have set thee over all the land of Egypt.' Whilst we are reading this passage we will look at our picture. The narrative continues (verse 42): 'And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck. And he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had, and they cried before him, Bow the knee, and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnathpaaneah' (*i.e.*, God spake, and he, the bearer of the name, came to life). 'And he gave him to wife Asenath, the daughter of Poti-pherah, priest of On. And Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt. And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh, king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt. And in the seven plenteous years the earth brought forth by handfuls. And he gathered up all the food of the seven years which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up food in the cities: the food of the field, which was round about every city, laid he up in the same. And Joseph gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left numbering, for it was without number. And unto Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came . . . and Joseph called the name of the first-born Manasseh: For God, said he, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house. And the name of the second called he Ephraim: For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.'

All the success that Joseph had in his life was due to God's merciful guiding. Joseph was sensible enough to know this, and took no credit to himself. This Pharaoh was the more ready to appoint an Asiatic from Canaan as his Prime Minister, inasmuch as he was not an Egyptian, but of Asiatic race himself. It may be observed here that the obelisk so familiar to us as Cleopatra's Needle on the Thames Embankment, was originally one of the obelisks put up in front of the Temple, where Joseph's father-in-law was priest, by Thothmes III.

In Genesis xli. verse 53, we read: 'And the seven years of plenteousness that was in the land of Egypt were ended. And the seven years of dearth began to come, according as Joseph had said: and the dearth was in all lands, but in the land of Egypt there was bread. And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. And Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do. And

the famine was over all the face of the earth. And Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold unto the Egyptians, and the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt. And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn; because that the famine was so sore in all lands.'

Now, who do you think were amongst those buyers of corn, journeying to Egypt? Can you guess? Joseph's own wicked brethren. The famine was great in the land of Canaan, and they were all starving. Jacob told his sons to go to Egypt to buy corn. According to the Eastern custom, they took gifts with them to present to the lord of the land. Joseph's brethren arrived, and came 'and bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth. And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly unto them.'

They knew him not. How could they? They were ignorant of all that had happened to him, after their cruel, unbrotherly behaviour towards him. Joseph asked them if they were spies, and questioned them about their home and parentage. He told them that it was impossible for him to sell them corn, unless one brother remained behind as hostage, and unless they went home and returned with their youngest brother to Egypt. This news upset them greatly. Well, they knew that their father would never give his consent to this proposal. The poor old man, they knew, had never recovered from the loss of his son Joseph. Therefore he would never trust Benjamin out of his sight. They could not conceive what to do. They were starving: they required corn for food for their families and cattle at home.

Up to this, no punishment for their wickedness had come to them. Here it came sure as fate. Great trouble was upon them. They felt their sin had found them out. They spoke out their minds to each other, not supposing that the great Egyptian prince could understand their language, for he spoke to them through an interpreter. But Joseph understood every word of their confession of guilt and their remorse, and was obliged to turn away and leave them, that he might weep unobserved. They had now no choice but to return to Canaan, and try to persuade their father to trust Benjamin to their care.

Joseph had a kind and generous heart. It was aching to see his youngest brother again, and it was to see his brother that he made this condition. It grieved him to see the distress his people were in. It did not occur to him to attempt any retaliation for the cruel treatment which he had received at their hands. That was all forgiven. The only thing that he was thinking about was, that

whereas he was in plenty, his people at home were starving. He ordered that their sacks should be filled with corn, and, without their knowledge, every man's bundle of money was hidden in his sack. Afterwards, on their way home, one of them opened his sack to feed his ass at the inn, and found the money in the sack's mouth, and then they all found that the same had been done to them.

They and their father were sore afraid when they saw the bundles of money, and Jacob, their father, said unto them: 'Ye have bereaved of my children. Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away. All these things are against me. And Reuben spake unto his father saying: Slay my two sons if I bring him not to thee; deliver him into my hand and I will bring him to thee again. And he said: My son shall not go down with you, for his brother is dead, and he is left alone. If mischief befall him by the way in which ye go, then shall ye bring down my grey hairs in sorrow to the grave' (Genesis xlii. verse 36).

The famine continued in the land of Canaan. The provisions which Joseph had given his family were all at last consumed. A second time they were obliged to travel to Egypt in quest of new supplies. Poor old Jacob had now to make up his mind to part with his dearly beloved Benjamin. They all knew that nothing short of his consenting to part with his youngest son would content the lord of the land, as his brethren called Joseph. This time they were tested once more by the orders of Joseph. On the occasion of this second visit, Joseph again had every sack filled with food, and every man's money put in his sack's mouth. He gave orders to take his own silver cup, and have it put in Benjamin's sack. He also told his servants that on the return journey the men should be stopped, their sacks searched, and that the man was to return to Egypt and be detained there in whose sack the silver cup was found.

Can you imagine the terror of these guilty-minded brothers, when the cup was discovered in the sack of Benjamin? Here was a terrible situation for them to face. They dared not return to their father without Benjamin. They fell upon their faces. They were brought low. This the Lord had wrought. Joseph was the instrument in God's hands for their discomfiture.

Joseph's brethren were terrified. They had been found with the Egyptian lord's property in their possession. There was no explaining away this fact. They were all brought back as thieves to the presence of Joseph. And now a generous spirit began to show itself in one of them. Judah became the spokesman for the rest. He explained firmly, but very humbly, the way their father had

bound them to bring back Benjamin safe, and that he himself had become surety for the lad to his father. He made a definite offer.

Genesis xlv. 33: 'Now therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren. For how shall I go up to my father and the lad be not with me? Lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father.'

And now we come to the opportunity for Joseph to return good for evil. He had in him the Christ-like spirit, eager to give to all free forgiveness. Note the splendid generosity of the way Joseph deals with his brethren in the following passage. Judah's offer showing love for his father, which made him ready to give himself as a slave to spare his father the sorrow of losing Benjamin, so touched Joseph that we read:—

Genesis xlv.: 'Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried: Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. And he wept aloud; and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard. And Joseph said unto his brethren: I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him, for they were troubled at his presence. And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now, therefore, be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life. For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in which there shall neither be earing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God, and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt. Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt, Come down unto me, tarry not; and thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast: and there will I nourish thee And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck. Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him. And the fame thereof was heard in Pharaoh's house, saying, Joseph's brethren are come; and it pleased Pharaoh well, and his servants. And Pharaoh said

unto Joseph, Say unto thy brethren, This do ye; lade your beasts, and go, get you unto the land of Canaan; And take your father and your households, and come unto me: and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land. Now thou art commanded, this do ye: take your wagons out of the land of Egypt for your little ones and for your wives, and bring your father, and come. Also regard not your stuff; for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours. And the children of Israel did so: and Joseph gave them wagons, according to the commandment of Pharaoh, and gave them provision for the way. To all of them, he gave each man changes of raiment; but to Benjamin, he gave three hundred pieces of silver, and five changes of raiment. And to his father he sent after this manner: Ten asses laden with the good things of Egypt, and ten she asses laden with corn and bread and meat for his father by the way. So he sent his brethren away, and they departed: and he said unto them, See that ye fall not out by the way. And they went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of Canaan unto Jacob their father, and told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not. And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived. And Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive; I will go and see him before I die.'

Is not this a beautiful ending? How wise and wonderful are God's judgments and God's ways. Turn to Genesis xlv. verse 1: 'And Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac. And God spake unto him in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here am I. And He said, I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again.' Jacob arrived safely in Egypt, and Joseph brough him before Pharaoh.

The record in Genesis tells us that it came to pass after these things that Joseph was told that his father was sick, and that he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, and went to Jacob. Then Jacob gave him a sketch of his own life, beginning with God's appearing to him at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessing him, and ending with what was evidently his most treasured memory, the death of Rachel, his favourite wife. Genesis xlviii. verse 7: 'And as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel

died by me in the land of Canaan in the way, when yet there was a little way to come unto Ephrath: and I buried her there in the way of Ephrath; the same is Bethlehem.'

Genesis xlviii. verse 8: 'And Israel beheld Joseph's sons, and said, Who are these? And Joseph said unto his father, They are my sons, whom God hath given me in this place. And he said, Bring them, I pray thee, unto me, and I will bless them. Now the eyes of Jacob were dim for age, so that he could not see. And he brought them near unto him; and he kissed them, and embraced them. And Jacob said unto Joseph, I had not thought to see thy face: and lo, God hath showed me also thy seed. And Joseph brought them out from between his knees, and he bowed himself with his face to the earth. And Joseph took them both: And Jacob put his hands upon their heads. And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life along unto this day; the angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads: and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth. And Israel said unto Joseph, Behold, I die: but God shall be with you, and bring you again unto the land of your fathers.'

Genesis xlix.: 'And Jacob called unto his sons and said, Gather yourselves together.' Jacob blessed them all separately and gave them instructions. In Genesis xlix. verse 29, we read: 'And he charged them, and said unto them, I am to be gathered unto my people: bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite, for a possession of a buryingplace. There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah. The purchase of the field and of the cave that is therein was from the children of Heth. And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people.'

Genesis l.: 'And Joseph fell upon his father's face, and wept upon him, and kissed him. And Joseph commanded his servants, the physicians, to embalm his father, and the physicians embalmed Israel.'

If you want to know all about what embalming means, you must go to the British Museum when you are in London, and there you will see for yourselves many mummies, embalmed bodies, pre-

served from the olden days of Egypt. We continue reading, verse 4: 'And when the days of mourning were passed, Joseph spake unto the house of Pharaoh saying, If now I have found grace in your eyes, speak, I pray you, in the ears of Pharaoh, saying, My father made me swear saying, Lo, I die; in my grave which I have digged for me in the land of Canaan, there shalt thou bury me. Now therefore, let me go up, I pray thee, and bury my father, and I will come again. And Pharaoh said, Go up, and bury thy father, according as he made thee swear. . . . And Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he, and his father's house; and Joseph lived an hundred and ten years. And Joseph saw Ephraim's children of the third generation: the children also of Machir, the son of Manasseh, were borne upon Joseph's knees,' that is to say, recognised as his descendants.

Genesis 1. verse 24: 'And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die, and God will surely visit you and bring you out of this land, unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence. So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old, and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.' So ends the book of Genesis, with the death of Joseph, and the embalming of his body, which was put in a coffin, that is, no doubt, in the usual decorated mummy-case, such as is to be seen any day in the British Museum.

The story of Joseph's life and the picture it gives of his character, is a fitting completion to the graphic scenes from the lives of the patriarchs, which form the bulk of the first book of the Bible, which is also a part of the first part of the Bible known as the Pentateuch, in which is preserved what has survived of the early tradition and history of the Jewish nation. Joseph, the most nearly faultless of the Jewish patriarchs, is a singularly noble and attractive character. The grave faults which are given with unshrinking honesty by the inspired writings in the lives of the other patriarchs, particularly in the life of Joseph's father, Jacob, are not to be found in his high-minded and consistent son. One might have expected that the son of Rachel, who stole her father's idols, the grandson of her who persuaded her son to deceive his father, and, above all, the son of Jacob himself, would have inherited their love of crooked ways.

But Joseph was, from his youth up, from the time he was thrown on his own resources, straightforward and trustworthy in every position of life, whether acting as steward of Potiphar's house, or as deputy for the keeper of the prison, or as chief ruler over the

land of Egypt. His wonderful success in life teaches the useful lesson of the supreme value of a trustworthy character. His generosity and magnanimity to his unnatural brothers, who had plotted to kill him, and had sold him as a slave to the Midianites, is very wonderful at that early age, long before men had the example and teaching of Christ. The way in which he rejoices over every sign of better feeling towards their father in these guilty brothers shows the spirit of a true Christian; and the way he put his brothers at their ease when he disclosed himself to them, by making little of their offences, and ascribing his coming to Egypt to the purpose of God, has the delicacy of a true gentleman.

And all this beautiful and noble character is built up upon a foundation without which it would not exist—the deepest godliness, which makes him feel thankfully that he is always in God's hands. 'God was with him,' is the summary of the writer of the Book of Genesis, and 'the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hands.' That he has been taken as a type of our Lord is very fitting, for doubtless the Spirit of our Lord was the Power that worked in him. The light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world was evidently with him. His love of his enemies, his ungrudging forgiveness of injuries, the way he overcame evil with good, is not approached in any other character in the patriarchal age.

In the Book of Genesis, which we have been studying, we have found two main divisions. The first eleven chapters contain the great prehistoric traditions of the origin of the world and of man, and of God's dealings with the human race in its childhood. These traditions were, perhaps, as we have pointed out, brought by Abraham when he came up from his home in Aram-Naharaim into the land of Canaan, in obedience to the Voice of God. With the call of Abraham, at the beginning of the twelfth chapter, we enter on a traditional, and at the same time historical account, of the origin of the Jewish race. In these thirty-nine chapters we have, not the complete biographies of the patriarchs, but rather a series of vivid scenes from their lives. It is probable that the traditions of the patriarchs gathered round the sanctuaries where they had worshipped. It is possible that the memories of the patriarchs may have been handed down by word of mouth, for it is difficult to over-estimate the strength of memory in times when there is little writing. It is less likely that the narratives were written down on clay tablets, such as we find in Babylonian libraries; though the possibility that Abraham, coming from Haran, brought with him the cuneiform (wedge-shaped) writing, and perhaps clay tablets, containing the Creation stories and other early narratives of Gen-

esis, is interesting to consider. If the minuteness of the pictures of patriarchal life has to be accounted for, it may be remembered that pastoral life in the unchanging and meditative East changes not at all, and it is not improbably true that as regards externals, the life of the wandering Aramæan chief, Abraham, is fairly represented by the life of the wandering Arab sheikh of to-day.

The story of the Exodus, and the journey to Canaan, is the subject of the Book of Exodus, the second book in the Pentateuch, which we have now to consider. It was rightly regarded by the Israelites, as the descendants of Israel (Jacob) were called, as the turning-point in their history—the decisive chain of events which lifted them out of the morass of slavery on to the high ground of conquerors of Canaan, making a horde of slaves a nation of warriors. What had made the Israelites a horde of slaves? They had come to Egypt and settled in Goshen on the invitation of the king of Egypt, himself, probably, an Asiatic. In Goshen they lived as in Canaan, a free, pastoral life, with their flocks and herds. After Joseph was dead, and the Pharaoh, who was Joseph's friend, had died too, a new king of Egypt noticed with alarm the rapid growth in the numbers of the Israelites, and feared that in time of war they might join an invader and imperil the kingdom. To stop this growth in numbers, Pharaoh took them for forced labour, and made them build him treasure cities. The forced labour, under severe taskmasters, was intended to take the manly spirit out of them, and to reduce them to the position of slaves. In Exodus i. 14, we are told, 'he made their lives bitter with hard bondage; in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field. All their service wherein they made them serve was with rigour.' He set taskmasters over them, who treated them cruelly and made them very unhappy. They had to work their hardest, both in the fields and in the cities. They had to make bricks to build with, and bricks of this kind have survived to the present day, and some of them you can see for yourselves in the British Museum. You can plainly see the little cut-up pieces of straw which were mixed up with the clay.

But ill-used, overworked, and underfed, the Israelites multiplied even more rapidly than before. As the forced labour had not had the desired effect, Pharaoh adopted other measures. He aimed at stopping the increasing numbers by killing all the male children as soon as they were born. We read of one mother in particular, Jochebed, the wife of Amram, who, wishing to save her child, hid him for three months, and when no longer able to keep him with her, bethought herself of a plan. Exodus ii. 3: 'And when she

could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink. And his sister stood afar off, to wit what would be done to him.' The ark was built, not of what we call bulrushes in England, but of papyrus reed, from the inner layers of which the first paper was made, and the name paper derived. The slime was bitumen, probably from Babylonia. Here lay this ark among the river reeds and the flowering rushes and beautiful flags and sedges and waterside vegetation such as grows near the brooks by which we love to walk in our country rambles. This mother prayed with all her heart to the Lord that her dear child's life might be saved. Her prayers were heard by God, and He took compassion on her and her babe.

The child's little sister stood watching from afar. She could not bear to have her little brother left like that all alone. She waited to see what was going to happen to him. There she stands. Look at the picture of her in her blue frock, with wistful eyes and open ears fixed in deepest attention.

It came to pass just that very day on which this little baby had been put into the water that the king's daughter came down with her maids to bathe in the river Nile. The princess was walking on the banks of the river; she saw the ark, and one of her maids went to fetch it. When she opened it she saw the child, and the babe wept. She had compassion on him, and immediately guessed that this must be one of the Hebrew babies. And now came the devoted little sister's chance of making herself useful. Up she went to the princess and said: 'Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee? And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. And the maid went and called the child's mother. And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages. And the woman took the child, and nursed it' (Exodus ii. 7).

We have here another example of the Lord's care of and goodness to all such as put their trust in Him. This Hebrew mother was no exception. She had placed her confidence in God, and prayed to Him, and He had not left her disappointed. God had a further purpose in mind in saving this baby's life. We shall learn presently what it was. Pharaoh's daughter called this child Moses (from an Egyptian word meaning 'son'). The princess took the child to live with her, and thus Moses had the splendid position of being brought up as an Egyptian prince of the blood royal, as the son of Pharaoh's daughter, intended by the childless

princess to be her father's successor. He received a good education, owing to the advanced position the ancient Egyptians occupied in learning and culture.

He grew up, and when he was old enough to understand, he saw that his poor countrymen, the Israelites, were grievously oppressed. Though now an Egyptian prince, he did not hesitate to cast in his lot with the enslaved Israelites. One day, having been specially provoked, and being very angry, he killed an Egyptian because he was beating an Israelite. Moses hid the body in the sand, and thought that he had not been seen; but his own countrymen did not keep the secret; and Pharaoh wanted to take his revenge. The life of Moses was in danger, and he had to flee for fear of being killed himself.

The greatness of the sacrifice he made by abandoning his high position as an Egyptian prince to succour his suffering fellow-tribesmen can scarcely be over-estimated. He gave up everything that makes life pleasant to try to rescue a horde of slaves, and weld them into a nation. And the slaves were not even grateful. He fled from Egypt, and took refuge in the land of Midian, and he sat down by a well, and there he met the seven daughters of Jethro, the priest of Midian, who came to draw water, and to fill the drinking troughs for their father's flocks. Some shepherds came and wanted to drive them away, but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their sheep. On this account they got back sooner than they otherwise would have done, and they told their father how an Egyptian had helped them. He said, Where is he? Why have you left the man? Why did you not bring him to eat bread with us? And they fetched Moses, and he was content to dwell with Jethro, and Jethro gave him his daughter Zipporah for a wife.

In Exodus iii. we read: 'Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb. And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and

the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God. And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites. . . . Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.

'And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?' He was the meekest and humblest of men, and had no faith in himself. He thought he would not be able to do so great a thing as this. God encouraged him and said, 'Certainly I will be with thee' (verse 12). Moses asked God what he was to say to the children of Israel in order that they should know that he had God's authority with him.

Verse 14: 'And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.' God's name—I AM—means that He alone truly exists.

Because Moses still remained fearful, the Lord showed him miracles. In his hand he carried a rod. This was turned into a serpent, then it was changed back again into a rod. Moses was in perfect health; but in a minute his hand became white as snow with leprosy, and immediately after it became again as his other flesh. The Lord enabled Moses himself to perform wonders, in order to impress on the Israelites that he was the man chosen by God to lead them. He came down from the mountain and went to his father-in-law, and said that he was going to Egypt. He took his wife and children and departed, bent on releasing his brethren from their bondage in Egypt. God had told Moses that it would be no easy task for him to persuade Pharaoh to let the children of Israel go, and that He would have occasion to visit this obstinate king with plagues. The Bible speaks of God 'hardening Pharaoh's heart.' This strikes us as needing explanation. We have heard and seen that God is Love. We ask ourselves how is it possible

then that the God of Love should harden anybody's heart. It puzzles us, and we feel convinced that it is necessary that we should put the right meaning into this statement. God wishes us to have tender hearts; to be kind and forgiving. We must plainly understand what is meant by a hardening of the heart. The explanation is this:

The Old Testament writers saw God as the ultimate cause of everything; and when it is said that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, nothing more is meant than that God is the ultimate cause of this, as of everything good and bad. Yet Pharaoh was the immediate cause of the hardening of his own heart by the misuse of the free will which God gives to every one, which free will involves the immediate responsibility of the person who makes the choice, for the choice made. It is thus equally true to say that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, and to say that Pharaoh hardened his own heart.

Pharaoh refused again and again to allow the Israelites to leave his country. They were very useful to him and he was a selfish tyrant. The Lord sent ten plagues upon Egypt, one after the other. Frogs, and flies, and lice, and locusts came in such numbers that it was difficult to see the light, and impossible to live under such conditions. The river was turned into blood, probably owing to some red vegetable growth, so runs the story of marvels in Exodus, so that there was no water to drink, either for man or for beast. All the cattle died of a grievous murrain. While all these direful things were happening to the Egyptians, the Israelites were safe. Pharaoh consulted all his wise men and magicians. Naturally his wish was to prevent all these plagues, but he found himself powerless; none of his wisest men could top God from carrying out His Will. The king saw himself obliged in his predicament to appeal for help to Moses, whose God alone, as he was made to see, was able to work great marvels or miracles, and remove all the trouble He had sent.

This state of affairs continued for some time. Pharaoh promised to allow the Israelites to go, and the plague ceased. As soon as the plague ceased he broke his word, and a new plague was sent. The Israelites were detained and detained in Egypt, and during all this time the Lord sent down to Moses more and more power and authority. It was the Lord's intention to prove to Pharaoh, to prove to the Egyptians, and to prove to the Israelites how futile it was for anybody to try to persist in any course against the Will of God.

The last visitation that was sent on Egypt was the most distressing of all. It was the plague of the firstborn. God decreed

that on a certain night the eldest son of every Egyptian was to die. Of Israelite children not one was to be touched, but all were to be preserved. A great cry of sorrow went up out of the land of Egypt. At last, when his own firstborn son had died with the rest, the king realised the extent of his folly. Meanwhile the Lord had commanded Moses to tell the Israelites to take for each family a lamb, one without blemish; to kill it, and to strike the blood of the lamb, as an offering to God and an atonement for those within the house, on their doorposts. By their doing this the Lord, when He passed by, would know that such a house belonged to an obedient Israelite. He would 'pass over' that house and not touch any child who lived therein. This is therefore called the Lord's passover. A feast was to be held. The flesh of the lamb was to be roasted and to be eaten in haste before they went forth out of Egypt, as Moses had told them after the plague of the firstborn, and this ordinance was to be kept year by year, in gratitude for their deliverance. They were also commanded to eat only a particular kind of bread, prepared without leaven—which was regarded as corrupt because it produces fermentation—and therefore called unleavened bread.

At last the time had come when the Israelites were enabled to depart out of Egypt. In our picture we see them all very busy packing up and fastening all their packages and bundles, and making ready. They had lived in Egypt for four hundred and thirty years. The Lord took the Israelites under the shadow of His wing. He became their Leader. It was He who showed them their way through all their wanderings in the wilderness, and in their passage through the Red Sea. He gave them a sign of His own. By day He gave a pillar of cloud, which by night He made a pillar of fire. Whenever the pillar of cloud or fire moved and indicated to the Israelites the direction where to go, they followed.

After the Israelites had left Egypt, Pharaoh regretted he had allowed them to go, and decided to pursue them. When they saw the king and his horses and chariots gaining on them, they were terrified. This was only natural, but, fortunately for them, there was no cause for alarm. They were safe in God's keeping. He who does wonders came to their rescue, and His Strength sufficed to bring safety to His chosen people, and disaster to their enemies. They were on the shore of the Red Sea. The Lord caused a mighty wind from the north-east to blow, which drove back the waters of the sea. The Israelites walked across the sands thus laid bare, and Pharaoh, seeing them landed safely on the other side, thought it possible to follow. The Lord willed it otherwise.

No sooner was this proud king with all his army, all his men, and all his horses and chariots well in the middle of the bed of the Red Sea, than the Lord changed the direction of the wind, and instead of blowing back the water the wind blew the water straight upon them. Thus Pharaoh, his host, and his horses, and his chariots were overwhelmed in the sea.

This Pharaoh is identified with Merenptah, the discovery of whose mummy has raised a discussion as to the accuracy of Exodus. The explanation is that the King either escaped from the catastrophe, or more probably, remained on the shore and sent his troops into the sea.

Chapter xv: 'Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation (R.V., praise him): my father's God, and I will exalt him.'

On this occasion the Book of Exodus mentions Moses' sister Miriam. She had remained with her brother, and we read that she was a prophetess. The Bible says, she 'took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them: Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously. The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.' (Exodus xv. 20.)

Here we will look at three pictures, all about events we read of in the life of Moses; part of which we have read about already, part of which we still have to read of. You will see the well in Midian, and two of the daughters of the priest feeding their flocks; you will see Moses killing the Egyptian; you will see the Lord handing him the Commandment tables on Mount Sinai; you will see the wicked Israelites worshipping the golden calf; you will see Moses throwing down the precious tables in his wrathful indignation at such idolatry. Some of these pictures are most beautiful. People come from far-distant lands, from all the different quarters of the earth, to see the originals and to enjoy them. Once seen they can never be forgotten.

CHAPTER V.

EXODUS xv. 22—LEVITICUS—NUMBERS—DEUTERONOMY—JOSHUA xxiv.
28 (MOSES AND JOSHUA).

EXODUS xv. verse 22, begins: 'So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur . . . and found no water . . . they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? And he cried unto the Lord; and the Lord shewed him a tree.' This (probably the bark and leaves) was thrown into the brackish water and it became sweet, so that they could use it for drinking purposes. God told the Israelites that if they would 'diligently hearken' (verse 26) unto His Voice, and do that which was right in His sight, and would give ear to His commandments, and keep His statutes, He would keep them all in His care.

They came next to a place called Elim (trees), an oasis where were twelve wells, or water-holes, in the sand, and three score and ten palm trees, and they encamped at this well-watered place. Then they took their journey from Elim and came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai. This was the fifteenth day of the second month after they had left Egypt. The Israelites began murmuring about something else now. They were great grumblers—never satisfied. They began regretting that they had left the flesh pots of Egypt. 'We remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick' (Numbers xi. 5). Where, they said, is the sense of dying in the wilderness first from thirst and then from hunger? Exodus xvi. verse 4: 'Then said the Lord unto Moses, Behold I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them whether they will walk in my law or no.'

God wanted to be obeyed, in order to discipline them into a nation of which He, the unseen Lord, would be King, and He wished to teach them by experience to trust Him completely. Besides His giving to the children of Israel manna for bread, the same chapter tells of His giving quails, which came in by night,

just as flights of quails do in the same desert country to-day. Verse 13: 'And it came to pass that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp; and in the morning the dew lay round about the host. And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground.'

Manna was the name given to the bread God rained down from Heaven. When the manna fell, the children of Israel exclaimed in Hebrew, *Man Hu*, which means in English, What is this? or, What is it? And our book of Exodus continues (verse 31), 'And the house of Israel called the name thereof Manna: and it was like coriander seed, white; and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey.' See how the Israelites in our picture are all busy picking up this precious food, and filling their pots and pans with it.

Exodus xvii. commences by saying that all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin to Rephidim, and pitched there. At this place the same thing happened as before. They found no water, and again there were murmurings and discontent. The Lord stood by Moses, and came to his aid. He said (Exodus xvii. verse 5): 'Go on before the people, and take thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod . . . take in thine hand. . . . Behold I will stand before thee upon the rock of Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. . . . Then came Amalek and fought with Israel in Rephidim.'

Moses told his lieutenant Joshua to choose men to fight the Amalekites. This was the beginning of the desert training by which God willed to harden a crowd of soft and self-indulgent slaves into a body of iron fighting men, fit to cope with and to conquer the giant warriors of Canaan. The Israelites overcame on this occasion by the aid of Moses, who had his hands upheld and supported by Aaron and Hur. Moses, guided by Jethro his father-in-law, who had come and joined him, now arranged all manner of work that had to be attended to amongst the Israelites. They organized everything, and chose men to help them, of whom Jethro said they were to be 'able men, such as fear God; men of truth, hating covetousness' (Exodus xviii. 21).

We see how careful they were as to the characters of the men they selected. Everything was put in its proper place, and there was no hurry or bustle. All was attended to quietly, and with true Eastern dignity. The Israelites wandered on, and came to

the wilderness of Sinai. They were led by God, and the words the Book of Exodus uses are: 'Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine' (Exodus xix. 4).

At this early stage of the national life of the Israelites, they seemed most anxious to obey all God's wishes and commandments. Moses now received further orders. Exodus xix. verse 9: 'The Lord said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever.'

The people were told to observe certain purifications in order to sanctify themselves before receiving the Lord's awe-inspiring revelation of Himself in the Ten Commandments. They were to be ready against the third day.

In Exodus xix. verse 16, we read: 'And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud: so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God. And they stood at the nether part of the mount. And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spoke and God answered him by a voice. And the Lord came down upon mount Sinai on the top of the mount; and the Lord called Moses up to the top of the mount; and Moses went up.'

Exodus xx. verse 1: 'And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me' (better, 'beside me'). 'Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.' As the first Commandment taught monotheism, the second, forbidding images, taught that God is a Spirit. Then follow the remainder of the Ten Commandments, or Ten Words, which sum up man's duty to God and to his neighbour, not forgetting the animals.

Then follows a list of laws, such as laws to regulate the treatment of slaves. It was, moreover, forbidden to make any images at all,

whether gold or silver. The Israelites were ordered to worship the One and Only God. The Unity and exclusive Sovereignty of God were insisted upon. The prohibition of images was intended to help them against their strong innate tendency to idolatry, brought from their ancestral home across the Euphrates, and further fostered by their long sojourn in Egypt. Amongst other things, it was impressed upon the Israelites always to be kind to strangers, to show hospitality, and share their own with others.

To everything the Israelites answered with one voice, and said: 'All the words which the Lord hath said will we do. And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. . . . And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people; and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient.' (Exodus xxiv. verses 3, 4, 7.)

Exodus xxiv. verse 18: 'And Moses went into the midst of the cloud. . . . and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights.'

We read next that the Lord commanded the children of Israel to bring offerings, and this had to be done with a willing heart. The Israelites were to bring gold and silver, and brass and blue and purple and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair, rams' skins and badgers' skins (seal skins, R.V.); oil for light, and spices for sweet incense. All manner of precious stones and gems, and beautiful wood. And all these things were required as materials for the Tabernacle, which was to be made according to the Lord's own pattern and instruction, as His visible dwelling-place, so that His invisible Presence could be easily realised by all among them.

The Israelites were to make an ark or chest of shittim wood, *i.e.*, acacia, the wood which grows in the desert; and this was to be overlaid with gold. And into this ark was to be put, as the most sacred revelation of an all-holy God, the Testimony or moral law which the Lord had given them. Two cherubims of gold (personifications of the storm winds) were to be at the two ends of the mercy seat of gold, that throne of God where the people's sins were covered or forgiven. The wings of the cherubims were to be stretched forth on high, so as to cover it. Then there was to be a candlestick or lampstand of pure gold, with branches and beautiful ornamentation. One seven-branched lampstand was to be made to give light. Also there were to be tongs and snuff dishes, and beautiful things that were necessary for the use and the beautifying of this place of worship. The Tabernacle was ordered to be

made of beautiful wood, and there were to be curtains all embroidered in blue and purple and scarlet, and these were to be suspended from lovely pillars, and the tent was to have a door with hangings. There was also an altar, and there was to be an outer court. Over the Mercy Seat in the innermost part of the Tabernacle, there was continually a bright, shining light, which the Bible calls the Shekinah, and this was the outward and visible sign of the Lord's presence among the Israelites. We turn to our Bible, Exodus xxxi. verse 17, and read: 'It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever . . . and he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone written with the finger of God.'

These precious commandment tables were kept in the Tabernacle, *i.e.*, 'the dwelling' of God. In the Holy of Holies was placed the Ark of the Covenant. Wherever the Israelites went, they took with them their Tabernacle. It was their most precious possession. It was built somewhat in the shape of a tent, and could easily be taken down and built up again like the other tents the Israelites lived in. This Tabernacle was the forerunner of King Solomon's Temple, which we shall read about later on.

We have mentioned Moses' brother Aaron. He and his sons were priests, and wore beautiful robes. All the details of these are most vividly described in different chapters of Exodus.

In Exodus xxxii. we are told that when the people saw that Moses delayed coming down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together and complained to Aaron, and said that it was no use their waiting any longer for Moses. They said, We will make us a golden calf (a memory of the Egyptian religious customs, or possibly of the Babylonian) and worship that. The Bible goes on to say that the women took off their golden earrings and ornaments, and that thus this idol was fashioned. When completed, they danced around it, and we know how wicked it was of them, because we remember distinctly that the Lord had just forbidden them, as He forbids us all, to worship idols.

Exodus xxxii. verse 15: 'And Moses turned and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand; the tables were written on both their sides. . . . And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables. . . . And it came to pass as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf and the dancing; and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount. And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground

it to powder, and strewed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it.'

Moses bitterly reproached Aaron for allowing such things to happen in his absence. Aaron answered: 'Thou knowest the people that they are set on mischief' (verse 22), and he went on to make a weak excuse, alleging compulsion and accident, 'then I cast it (the gold) into the fire, and there came out this calf.'

The Lord called the Israelites a wicked and stiff-necked nation. Many fell in battle because the Lord hid His face and favour from them. Moses pleaded for the Lord's forgiveness, and interceded for his people. And God, who is full of goodness and mercy, and abundant in patience, heard Moses' prayers. Moses took the Tabernacle and pitched it without the camp. Every man was at his own tent door, and looked after Moses as he went into the Tabernacle.

Exodus xxxiii. verse 9: 'And it came to pass, as Moses entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the Lord talked with Moses. And all the people saw the cloudy pillar stand at the tabernacle door: and all the people rose up and worshipped, every man in his tent door. And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend. . . . And Moses said . . . Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee . . . and consider that this nation is thy people. . . . And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live. And the Lord said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: and it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: and I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen.' This represents a spiritual experience, and is not to be taken literally.

Exodus xxxiv. verses 1, 2, 5: 'And the Lord said unto Moses, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest. And be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning unto mount Sinai, and present thyself there to me in the top of the mount. . . . And the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no

means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children.'

We find in life that the people who do evil are not always the ones who suffer most from the evil consequences; that it is more often the ones who are innocent of wrongdoing, and even little children unto the third and fourth generation who will have to suffer for the sins which their forefathers have committed. This is not because our Lord is unjust. This is because nobody can ever do anything, good or bad, to himself or to herself alone. We live in a world full of other people, and whatever we do affects somebody else. If we do the right thing, we not only keep our own account clear, but we are the means of helping a fellow creature. If we sin, somebody else is made to suffer, and this is often a person who is absolutely innocent. Now I hope we have made this passage, which has perplexed people sometimes, more easy to understand.

We left Moses on the Mount with the Lord appearing to him, though not of course a visible appearance, for we must remember as an eternal truth that 'no man hath seen God at any time' (John i. 18), for 'God is a spirit.'

Exodus xxxiv. verses 8, 10: 'And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped. . . . And he said, Behold, I make a covenant: before all thy people I will do marvels, such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation: and all the people among which thou art shall see the work of the Lord.'

The Lord promised the Israelites to drive out before them all their enemies—the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. And the Lord was most emphatic in His message to Moses that the Israelites should destroy all the altars, should break all the images and cut down all the groves which belonged to these idol worshippers. We know that the Lord is a jealous God—jealous only for our highest good, which is exclusive devotion to Himself.

Here we have the instruction given by God Himself through Moses to the Israelites. It was their most sacred duty to fight against the false gods, and instead to proclaim the one and only God. This teaching has its parallel in the New Testament, when Christ declares to His disciples that they are to go forth and make Him known as the Saviour of all the world, whom all mankind shall accept. The Lord made Moses write down all His divine words. And Moses was with the Lord forty days and forty nights, in which time he neither ate bread nor drank water.

Exodus xxxiv. verse 29: 'And it came to pass, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses' hand . . . that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone. . . . And Moses called unto them; and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him . . . and he gave them in commandment all that the Lord had spoken with him in Mount Sinai. And till (R.V. when) Moses had done speaking with them he put a vail on his face.'

The Bible tells us about Bezaleel and Aholiab, gifted artists, in whom the Lord put wisdom and understanding to know how to work all manner of beautiful things for the service of the sanctuary. Any work done can be inspired by God if we give ourselves to Him as His instruments. One really feels that the old Italians must have received into their hearts a great amount of similar wisdom, because their beautiful works of art seem to be inspired by the Spirit of God, so much of what they wrought was done unto the Lord, and that is why their works are not for a season but for ever.

Our reading of the Book of Exodus is drawing to a close. We read that when the making of the holy garments and the holy furniture was completed and the Tabernacle upreared and consecrated, as God commanded Moses, Moses offered the first daily sacrifice as the Lord commanded him, and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle.

Just before passing on it behoves us here to say that in Exodus we find the record of the foundation of the constitution which made of Israel a united people, and one separate and different from all those around them. God spake: 'Israel is my son, even my first-born' (Exodus iv. verse 22). While in Genesis we read of individual members of a family, in Exodus we read about the transformation of a tribe or tribes, which were rescued from bondage in Egypt, into a nation. At the Red Sea we find a nation not yet fully born, rejoicing in its deliverance, with thanksgivings uppermost in its heart, as well as hope for the future, and at Sinai we see the same nation consecrated by the Covenant. The law was intended to form them into a holy nation, and thus they were to be a foreshadowing of the high calling of the Christian Church as described in the New Testament.

We now come to the third book of the Pentateuch, called Leviticus, after the Levites. It is really a manual of ceremonial directions for priests and worshippers. The Levites were the priestly tribe among the twelve, and distinguished for fidelity and disinterestedness. In remembrance of God's mercy at the time

of the Passover, on which occasion we recall that all the Hebrew firstborn had been spared, the Levites, the whole tribe of them, were specially appointed for the services of the Tabernacle. They became the priests who had to attend to all the offices in the Tabernacle of the Lord. The priestly tribe was probably developed through the influence and position of Moses, himself a Levite, and the chief minister of the Sanctuary. The traditions of the priesthood and of the public worship passed down to his descendants. The ancient tribe of Levi had broken up long before, and the new priestly tribe took its real origin from Moses. The Book of Leviticus falls into several clear-cut parts: (1) The Law of Sacrifice (chapters i.-vii.). (2) The Consecration of the Priesthood (chapters viii.-x.). (3) The Law of Clean and Unclean (chapters xi.-xvi.). (4) The Law of Holiness, with the Sabbatical Year, and the Year of Jubilee, from *jubel*, the ram's-horn trumpet blown on the Day of Atonement, when the year began (chapters xvii.-xxvi.).

The Israelite nation was only newly-born, or in its childhood. Everybody alike has to start at the very beginning and must be sure to lay a good and firm foundation. We begin the lesson of life when we are young, and go on learning to the day of our death.

The fourth book of the Bible, which is the fourth division of the Pentateuch, is called Numbers. It is easy to find out why. It comes from the two numberings of the children of Israel, one near the beginning and one near the end of the wanderings in the wilderness. They were numbered in order that Moses might know how many people he had to look after. Moses had a large family to train for the Promised Land. The different tribes of Israel were stationed at different places around the Tabernacle. In the sixth chapter of the Book of Numbers, verses 24-26, Aaron is directed by God through Moses to give a very beautiful blessing indeed to the children of Israel: 'The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.'

You see that God remains always the same. He speaks to you and to me, just as He did in the days of old to the Israelites. He alone is always right. Is it not the greatest possible comfort to us to know that all of us are always in His loving care, and whether we live or whether we die it is unto Him?

In the first few years of the desert life of the Israelites the Lord had been willing to send them without much delay into the

Promised Land, but the misdeeds of the people and their want of staunchness of character induced the Lord to postpone this step. He spoke unto Moses, and said (Numbers xiii. verse 2): 'Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan . . . of every tribe of their fathers shall ye send a man, every one a ruler among them. And Moses . . . sent them from the wilderness of Paran . . . and Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan . . . and go up into the mountain: and see the land, what it is; and the people that dwelleth therein, whether they be strong or weak, few or many; and what the land is that they dwell in, whether it be good or bad; and what cities they be that they dwell in, whether in tents, or in strong holds; and what the land is, whether it be fat or lean, whether there be wood therein, or not. And be ye of good courage, and bring of the fruit of the land. Now the time was the time of the firstripe grapes. So they went up and searched the land from the wilderness of Zin unto Rehob. . . . And they ascended by the south, and came unto Hebron; . . . and they came unto the brook of Eshcol, and cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff; and they brought of the pomegranates, and of the figs. . . . And they returned from searching of the land after forty days.' So huge was the bunch of grapes that to avoid crushing it, it had to be hung from a staff carried by two strong men.

They reported that the country certainly was overflowing with milk and honey, a conventional expression to describe its richness; nevertheless the people who dwelt there were strong, and the cities walled and very great. The Amalekites dwelt in the south; the Hittites and the Jebusites by the sea and on one side of Jordan. Caleb and Joshua were for going up at once to possess the land. Both were brave soldiers, and they said that the Israelites had it in them to conquer the Canaanites. But the other men were timid. They reported evil. They said that the people were giants, sons of Anak, and far too strong for them to fight. 'We are all but as grasshoppers' in comparison, they said. Joshua and Caleb believed in God's promise, and the other ten spies did not. Thus it came about that once more the Israelites murmured and blamed Moses, and were eager to stone Joshua and Caleb. The glory of the Lord appeared in the Tabernacle. The Lord said to Moses, He wondered how long the children of Israel would think fit to provoke His anger; how many more signs they would require before they believed in Him. The Lord said He would smite them all with a pestilence. Moses prayed

for forgiveness for the Israelites, and God made a compact with them. To the people He said (Numbers xiv. verse 30): 'Doubtless ye shall not come into the land concerning which I swear to make you dwell therein, save Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua, the son of Nun. But your little ones . . . them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised.'

Numbers xx. verse 1: 'Then came the children of Israel, even the whole congregation into the desert of Zin in the first month; and the people abode in Kadesh; and Miriam died there, and was buried there.'

Once again there were more faithless complainings on the part of the Israelites on account of having no water. It is certainly hard to have nothing to drink, but we feel that by this time they really ought to have put their trust in God, who always provided for all their needs.

Verse 9: 'Moses took the rod from before the Lord as he commanded him. . . . And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice, and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank and their beasts also.'

The Lord reproved Moses severely for having struck the rock twice instead of once. Moses had lost his temper. As he was the chosen leader of the Israelites, the Lord expected him to exercise more control over himself so as to set a good example. Great as he was, he failed here, and a punishment had to be meted out to him. His punishment was that the Lord would not allow him to bring the people to their destination in the land of promise. One cannot but feel extremely sorry for Moses, who had done wonderful work in carrying out God's purpose, and welding a horde of slaves into a nation.

Moses sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom, asking him to give permission to the Israelites to pass through his kingdom in peace. Moses assured the king that the Israelites would not pass through his fields, nor through the vineyards belonging to his people, nor would they drink the water of the wells. Moses promised that the Israelites would remain on the regular caravan track, but the king of Edom would not trust them, and so the children of Israel had to turn away and proceed on their journey by another route. They came across the Canaanites, who lived east of Jordan. These had to be fought against, and were defeated by the Israelites. No sooner was this accomplished than again discontent arose. The Lord sent a plague of fiery serpents ('fiery' means, whose bite caused fatal inflammation) among the people, which bit them, so that many died. This time they ac-

knowledge their sin before the Lord, who took compassion on them. He commanded Moses to put a brazen serpent on the top of a long pole. All people who looked with faith upon that were to be cured. Mothers might hold up their dying children's faces to this brazen serpent, and thus seek deliverance. A son might raise up his stricken father, and thus help him to recover health and strength.

In this connection let us remember our Saviour's words. When He was on earth He alluded to this very thing. He said that just in the same way as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness in the sight of all, so that whoever looked on that, man, woman, or child, should be healed of the poison of the serpent-bite, just so He Himself would be lifted up on the cross in order that whoever looked with faith unto Him should be saved from the death caused by the poison of sin. On this account did our Heavenly Father send down to us His only beloved Son Jesus Christ, to die for us and to save us. Wonderful indeed was the cure God provided for the children of Isarel. But think of our cure in comparison! Think what we are given at God's hands, and by willingness of His only Son, perfect spiritual health, that is, salvation for our souls.

We read of so many places that the Israelites touched upon in their wanderings that we can hardly remember their names. One, however, let us try and fix in our memory. In the country of Moab there is a mountain called Pisgah. We shall hear all about this presently in connection with Moses. The Israelites fought many kings amongst others Sihon and Og, and their people, the Amorites and the Bashanites, both of whom they smote, and then took possession of their lands. The Israelites pitched in the plain of Moab, on this side of Jordan, by Jericho. This was the kingdom of Balak, the son of Zippor. Balak saw all the havoc the Israelites had wrought to other countries and kingdoms of Canaan. Naturally, Balak, king of Moab, and his people did not relish the idea of the Israelites coming their way. They were sore afraid of them. Balak was a heathen, like all except the chosen people. Balak sent messengers unto one of the famous soothsayers called Balaam, the son of Beor, to a place called Pethor, far away by the river Euphrates. The king asked Balaam to curse the children of Israel. The soothsayer answered that before doing this he first desired to consult the Lord's wishes, so as to ascertain what it was he was required to do in this matter. Now Balaam was also a heathen, but a power was working within him which was put into his heart by God. All this was but half-known to Balaam himself, but so

strong was God's spirit in him that he simply could not go against this inner voice. In spite of himself he had to act in accordance with it. The Lord forbade Balaam to curse the children of Israel. This was told to King Balak, who was disappointed and furious at being disobeyed.

He sent more messengers, and offered richer gifts, gold and silver, to Balaam. In other words, Balak tried his hardest to persuade Balaam to do his will. Nothing availed. Balaam would have liked to take Balak's gifts if he could have got them without openly disobeying God. Again and again Balak tried to win Balaam. He declared that he would take no refusal from anybody, except from Balaam himself. The latter now saw himself forced, really though only half-consciously by his own greed, to set out on a journey to King Balak. On the way the Lord sent an angel to meet Balaam. We are told that he himself could not see this angel.

'The ass saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand; and the ass turned aside out of the way and went into the field, and Balaam smote the ass to turn her into the way. But the angel of the Lord stood in a path of the vineyards, a wall being on this side and a wall on that side. And when the ass saw the angel of the Lord she thrust herself unto the wall and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall, and he smote her again. And the angel of the Lord went further and stood in a narrow place where there was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left. And when the ass saw the angel of the Lord she fell down under Balaam, and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with a staff. And the Lord opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee that thou hast smitten me these three times? And Balaam said unto the ass, Because thou hast mocked me; I would there were a sword in my hand, for now would I kill thee. And the ass said unto Balaam, Am I not thy ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine unto this day? Was I ever wont to do so unto thee? And he said, Nay. Then the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand, and he bowed down his head and fell flat on his face.' (Numbers xxii. verse 23.)

This is an interesting example of the dramatic way in which the Hebrews described their religious experience. Of course, God's power to do anything is not questioned; the question is whether the story is meant to be taken literally or not. If not taken literally, the lesson is just the same. The ass may have been silent, and yet to Balaam's conscience the silence may have been loud with

spiritual speech. Dealing with the story of Balaam and his ass, the present Bishop of London writes: 'On any explanation, the account of this warning apparition must have come from Balaam, as no one else was present, and he, as the *Speaker's Commentary* suggests, may, as an augur, have given a meaning according to his art, to the natural sounds of the ass just, as the augurs at Rome gave a meaning to the noise of the geese on the Capitol. No wonder at such a time that the sounds took a warning tone to his uneasy conscience.'

Balaam felt he had sinned, and asked the angel of the Lord for forgiveness, but he was told to proceed on his journey with the princes of Balak. He was told by the angel, 'Only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak.'

Balaam blessed Israel, for his eyes were open, for he saw God's will clearly, and felt the compulsion of God's spirit. In spite of Balak's indignant remonstrances, Balaam, whom he had brought to curse Israel, blessed the nation again and again. King Balak was indeed forced to admit that he was absolutely powerless to resist God's Will. The Lord's Blessing rested on Israel; King Balak was not permitted in any way to harm them. God's anger rested on Balaam because he did all he could, and all he dared, to assist the king of Moab against Israel. Though his lips were loyal, his heart was disloyal to the Lord.

The Bible now tells us of the death of Aaron, that faithful brother of Moses, who had followed him in all his wanderings.

Numbers xx. verse 28: 'And Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son; and Aaron died there in the top of the mount: and Moses and Eleazar came down from the mount.' Not long after this time Moses received from the Lord the news of his own approaching death, and of the appointment of Joshua as his successor, which he received with characteristic self-abnegation.

The Lord informed the Israelites what were to be their borders when they possessed the Promised Land. Also how the twelve tribes are to divide the land by lot. Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, was not forgotten. Joshua blessed him, and gave him Hebron for an inheritance. This was a recompense because he had wholly followed the Lord God of Israel.

The fifth book of the Bible is called Deuteronomy, which means a copy or repetition of the law. The plains of Moab are the scene of the book. The time is just after the wanderings in the wilderness, and just before the passage of the Jordan, and the period occupied by the book is not more than forty days. The book

chiefly consists of those discourses spoken by Moses before his death, describing the experiences of the forty years, with a final section including Moses' charge to Joshua, the Song of Moses, and the Blessing of Moses. Writing was employed in Palestine long before Moses' time, and there was nothing to prevent the great lawgiver of that period from leaving written works, though compilers may have arranged the documents at a much later date. The Book of Deuteronomy is full of Evangelical religion, and is frequently quoted by our Lord in a way that argues the highest estimate of its religious value.

In this book Moses repeats all that had happened to the children of Israel during the years that he had led them. He impresses upon them to seek the Lord. All who earnestly do this shall find Him. Everybody is to keep His Commandments. The laws and statutes are laid down which are to be observed in the Land of Promise. Kindness to animals is enjoined; so is protection of strangers. God is a Loving as well as a Just and Righteous God. All children are to be taught diligently; however young they be, they are to be told of the Lord God (Jehovah). Young and old are to know that the Lord's Commandments are not far removed from us, nor too difficult for us to understand; that, on the contrary, they are quite near to us, even in our own hearts. All of us—the Israelites of old, and we of the present day—come upon the earth for a little while and then pass away. It is for us all alike to learn the same lesson, that God is Love. He has done everything for us. In return the Lord asks from us our gratitude—our little best. We are not to fear because it is so little: we are weak, but God can make us strong. We must put our whole trust in Him. All these things, and many more, are suggested for our good by the great book of Deuteronomy.

In chapter xxxi. verse 2, we read that Moses spake these words unto all Israel: 'And he said unto them, I am an hundred and twenty years old this day; I can no more go out and come in: also the Lord hath said unto me, Thou shalt not go over this Jordan.'

Sadly he remembers his disobedience and hastiness. He urges the Israelites to be of good courage; the Lord has promised to take them into the Promised Land, and He never fails nor forsakes. Moses calls upon Joshua to take his place, and to take charge of the Israelites. Moses closes his farewell address to the children of Israel with a solemn song, which shows him to have been a poet as well as a lawgiver.

We find the song of Moses in Deuteronomy, but of this we can

only give a brief extract (xxxii. 10, 11, 12): 'He (Jehovah) found him (*i.e.*, Israel) in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led; (R.V. compassed) him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him.'

At last we draw near to the end of Moses. We read in chapter xxxii. verse 48: 'The Lord spake unto Moses get thee up into this mountain Abarim, unto mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, that is over against Jericho; and behold the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel for a possession, and die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people.' And in chapter xxxiv.: 'And Moses went up to the top of Pisgah. . . . And the Lord showed him all the land of Gilead unto Dan, and all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah unto the utmost sea; and the south and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, unto Zoar. And the Lord said unto him, This is the land which I swear unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed: I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but shalt not go over thither. So Moses the Servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab according to the word of the Lord. And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor; but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day. And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated. And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days. . . . And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, in all the signs and the wonders, which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land, and in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moses showed in the sight of all Israel.'

And thus all is made plain to us, and we see why the Lord saved that helpless baby's life in the papyrus ark, just as Joseph's life had been saved, each of them saved in order to work God's Will.

The great work of Moses was the uniting of the tribes in common loyalty as one nation, based on a common loyalty to One God. Moses was really the founder of the religion of Israel. He completed the work of Abraham. Abraham began that religion by his discovery that the voice of God could be heard and obeyed by the individual. Moses added the discovery that the voice of God

could be heard and obeyed by the community, that a nation could be a friend of God, as well as a man. In other words, personal religion owed most to Abraham; social or corporate religion owed most to Moses. Moses showed that religion was necessary for the life of a community as Abraham had shown it was necessary for the life of a man.

We ordinary people must not think that the clever people are the only ones who are expected to work for God. God has duties for all of us; none of us indeed is likely to be chosen to do notable things like the great men we read of in the Bible. But the Lord speaks to you and to me, and the sooner we understand the better that the Lord has put us into this world to do something useful in His service. To begin with, we are not to live selfish lives; we are not to think first and only of ourselves. This is displeasing to God. The next time we say our prayers, we must ask God's blessing and His help that He, our Heavenly Father, may be pleased to point out to us what it is He wishes us to do. We shall receive an answer from Him, we may rest assured.

Perhaps next day our hearts will lead one of us, at God's dictation, to visit that hospital we have so often passed by and never before thought of entering. Standing at some poor little child's bed, we shall see him lying there in pain and suffering. The nights are sleepless, and oh! so long, and morning brings no relief. Then we shall read him a story, and tell him something out of this book and we shall show him some pictures, the ones we have learned to love. We shall become friends and we shall help each other to learn God's lessons; such as patience, unselfishness, gratitude, one and all of them most valuable. All of us would be the richer and happier for such intercourse. In this way we shall be doing just our little best towards God's work, and He will deign to accept our gift. Next time we pass a hospital, such as we see here in our picture, it will be with thoughts of, and sympathy with, the inmates.

It was God's wish that Moses should put the care of the Israelites into the hands of Joshua, the son of Nun, and Joshua was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hand on him; and the children of Israel hearkened unto him.

In our reading we have arrived at another book, called Joshua after the leader, whose deeds it records. The Book of Joshua is sharply separated from the Pentateuch in the Hebrew Canon; it heads the Prophets, *i.e.*, the Former Prophets or Historians. It describes the conquest of Canaan by the children of Israel. God's commands to Joshua were not to look to the right, and not to

look to the left, but to go straight forward. 'Be strong and of a good courage' was God's message to him.

The Lord promised to be with him wherever he went and wherever he led the Israelites. And the Lord fulfilled His promise. Joshua became a celebrated man. He was a great general, and led the children of Israel from victory to victory. As a first step to crossing the Jordan into Canaan proper, he sent out spies to gauge the strength of one of his enemies, the King of Jericho, whose city was close to the ford of the Jordan. In the meanwhile he ordered that the wives and the little ones and the cattle should all remain behind. The men whom he sent out as spies arrived at the town of Jericho.

At that time there lived a woman in Jericho called Rahab. She had not lived a virtuous life, but an opportunity was given to her to mend her ways. She became a good woman and believed in the Lord. She looked upon the Israelites as being His own chosen people. The King of Jericho heard that his country was being reconnoitred by the Israelites, and that two spies were lodged in the house of Rahab. The King's men tracked them there, but Rahab pretended not to know what had become of them, and she sent their pursuers on a fool's errand. This was at the time of the shutting of the gate of the town, when it was dark. She had already brought the spies to the roof of her house and had hidden them there under a heap of stalks of flax.

Meanwhile the King's followers pursued them as far as the ford of the Jordan; of course the pursuit was in vain. Rahab confided in the Israelite spies, and said that she knew right well that the Lord had given the land into their hands, so that terror was upon her and her people. All the miracles that the Lord had done for the children of Israel had come to the ears of her people. She begged the Israelites to do her a favour and to swear that as she had shown them kindness, they would show kindness to her and her house. She asked for the lives of her father and mother, brothers, and sisters. The spies agreed to this. Then she let them down by a cord through the window out of the town, for her house was upon the town wall. She advised them to flee to the mountains so as to avoid the pursuit from Jericho.

In order to distinguish her house from that of any other she had been told by the spies to hang out a scarlet cord, our chronicle calls it a thread, which she bound to the window. Rahab's expectations proved correct. The Lord protected Israel. He directed Joshua by what means to secure a victory. The priests were told to carry the ark, the symbol of Jehovah's presence, and to what place to

move it. The Lord ordered the children of Israel to follow it. The Israelites crossed the river Jordan as they had crossed the Red Sea. The waters divided before the ark and made a dry way for it. The feet of the priests who bore the ark stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan.

In remembrance of this and in gratitude for their protection and preservation on this memorable occasion, Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of Jordan where the feet of the priests had stood, also twelve stones taken out of Jordan for the different tribes in a place called Gilgal; and they kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even in the plains of Jericho. 'And they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the Passover, unleavened cakes and parched corn in the self-same day. And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year' (Joshua v. verses 11, 12).

And now Jericho was 'staitly' shut up. Israel encamped before the town. Joshua received orders from the Lord that they were to compass the city, and all the men of war and the priests bearing the ark, as we see them in one panel of the picture of the bronze door at page 18, were to walk in procession. Seven priests were to lead the way, going on before with seven trumpets of ram's horns, trumpets of jubilee. We see here that Canaanite stronghold, the city of Jericho. The original of this picture is another panel of that famous bronze door. It is quite interesting to know that every little baby born in Florence at this present time is taken through this door into the church to be baptized, and the building is called the Baptistery. Looking at our picture again we see men blowing the long trumpets, and we remember that they were commanded not to utter one single sound by voice until the signal was given. Joshua vi. verse 5: 'Then shall all the people shout with a great shout, and the wall of the city shall fall down flat.' Everybody was put to the sword except Rahab and her family, who were spared. This was the reward of faith. Henceforth she remained with Israel, and we read of her marrying into one of their families. Some think that she married Salmon, and that their son was Boaz, that Boaz's son was Obed, and Obed's son was Jesse, and Jesse's son was David, from whom was descended Joseph, the husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

All the gold and silver of the town was put aside and consecrated unto the Lord for use in the Tabernacle. Joshua's fame went through the country far and wide. With his fighting men trained

in desert warfare he defeated many kings, and took many cities, and his name spread terror through Canaan. Everybody dreaded the strength the Lord gave to the children of Israel. The Lord told Joshua he was to fear nothing.

After Jericho had been taken the Canaanites were very much alarmed, and some of them desired to make peace. The people of a town called Gibeon succeeded by a stratagem in making a treaty with Israel. They sent an embassy to Joshua with worn-out and mended clothing, and mouldy bread and worn-out wine-skins, and they told him they came from a far country to make a treaty with Israel, because they had heard what God had done for them. The Israelites made the treaty, and on the second day after found themselves at Gibeon, which was a city of the Canaanites. They were very angry, but Joshua insisted on their keeping true to the treaty. Some Canaanite kings, too, were even more angry with Gibeon for making peace with Israel. The King of Jerusalem called in four other kings, and got together a great army and besieged Gibeon. The men of Gibeon sent to Joshua for help. Joshua marched all night, and surprised the besieging Canaanites and routed them at the pass of Beth-horon.

Joshua x. 11: 'And it came to pass as they fled from before Israel and were in the going down to Beth-horon, that the Lord cast down great stones from heaven upon them unto Azekah.' (That is, hailstones.) And now we have come to a famous and much-misunderstood passage, verse 12: 'Then spake Joshua to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. Is not this written in the book of Jasher?'

It has been supposed that this passage means that the sun actually stood still, which would mean that the earth ceased to move; but the truth is, such a literal interpretation of this highly poetic Eastern language is typical of the dullness of our Western minds, which makes us so often misunderstand the meaning of the hyperbolic and figurative language of the Eastern poets, who wrote much of the Bible.

The real meaning is perfectly plain. Joshua's army had chased the Amorites up the pass of Beth-horon, and were chasing them down the other side of the pass, discomfited by a terrible storm of hail; and Joshua prayed that the storm-clouds might not shut out the sun, but that the day might continue long enough to complete

the defeat of the Amorites. The poetic passage quoted from the book of Jasher merely asserts that the day continued long enough for the people to avenge themselves upon their enemies. If this passage be interpreted literally, it would be only fair to insist on the same interpretation of other poetic passages. For instance: The hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord' (Psalm xcvi. 5); 'The stars in their courses fought against Sisera' (Judges v. 20). The passages quoted by the Bishop of London in his admirable book on the difficulties of the Old Testament plainly condemn the folly of taking literally Joshua's words as recorded in the Book of Jasher.

The spoils of all the cities fell into the hands of the Israelites; the vineyards and the cornfields, and the fruit, and the store of all kinds, became an inheritance according to their tribes; and thus at last the land rested from war. Joshua gathered all the people around him in Shechem, because he was getting old and because he wished to address them for the last time. He called for the elders of Israel, and for their heads and for their judges and for their officers; and they presented themselves before God, and Joshua gave them his first farewell address, probably at Shiloh, specially dwelling on the danger of any intercourse with the Canaanites, and the destruction any backsliding of theirs would bring on them from the Lord. In his second and final farewell address at Shechem, Joshua said: 'Thus said the Lord God of Israel: your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods. And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan' (Joshua xxiv. verse 2). Joshua went on: See what the Lord has done: He has destroyed every nation, but you has He saved. It is your duty therefore to live up to your favoured position, and you must show gratitude for God's goodness to you. Joshua, in his first farewell address, had spoken of himself as going the way of all the earth, and that his hearers themselves knew how faithful God had been to them. Everything had been fulfilled according to God's promise. They had been safe, brought into the promised land, and they must never worship any other gods, but only their One True God. If they transgressed, he predicted that punishment would most surely overtake them. He implored them to be mindful of all their manifold blessings.

After the second and final address we read, Joshua xxiv. verse 28: 'So Joshua let the people depart, every man unto his own inheritance. And it came to pass after these things that Joshua, the

son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being an hundred and ten years old. And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnath-serah, which is in mount Ephraim, on the north side of the hill of Gaash.'

The character of Joshua is a very fine one. He is always the practical religious teacher as well as the great general. He reminds us of General Gordon. The tenderness with which he brings home his sin to Achan never interferes with the inexorable firmness with which he punishes him. His sense of supernatural guidance and protection, issuing in deep reverence and humility, is finely illustrated by the meeting in a vision of the great Israelite captain with the captain of the Lord's host outside Jericho, described in the Book of Joshua. The historic value of the Book of Joshua has been amply confirmed by some of the tablet letters found at a village called Amarna, between Memphis and Thebes in Egypt, where political letters which had passed between tributary Asiatic kings and the Pharaohs were found in 1888, showing the high civilisation of Canaan in the days of Moses and Joshua.

Of course we should not now describe events like the battle of Beth-horon, the crossing of Jordan, or the taking of Jericho with the passionate hyperbole which is the natural expression of these Eastern chroniclers. We should record the bare facts, not the glorified vision of them given only to minds who saw God in everything and everything in God.

CHAPTER VI.

JUDGES—RUTH.

WE have now come to the Book of Judges. The Judges were the leaders or governors, whom God raised up from time to time to assist the cause of national unity against the dissensions of the tribes, and against the tyranny of the heathen kings of the Canaanites. After the death of Joshua the Israelites had no single leader obeyed by all the tribes. The Israelites without a head gradually lost their hard-won unity gained under Moses and Joshua, and were almost swallowed up in the heathen Canaanitish population. The children of Israel forsook the Lord and served Baal and Ash-toreth. During this period there was often complete anarchy, that is lack of any ordered government at all. As the Book of Judges xvii. 6 says: 'Every man did that which was right in his own eyes.' Such was the result of worshipping idols, and intermarrying with the Canaanites, who, it may be observed, had not been exterminated as Moses had commanded.

When Joshua was dead, Judah was chosen by the Lord to take the lead, and Judah took Simeon with him. The uncompleted conquest of Canaan was carried but little further, though wars continued, and the Israelites forgot all about God's requirements. They followed the evil example of the natives of Canaan; they worshipped strange gods, such as groves (a grove—*ashera*—meant a sacred tree or pole representing a tree, probably a relic of the ancient tree-worship). The Lord saw the Israelites turning away from His Commandments, and at this He was deeply angered. As soon as they were left to shift for themselves misfortune overtook them. Their enemies defeated them; and we read of the Israelites falling into the hands of various heathen nations. Again the Lord in His mercy helped them. He raised up daring fighting men as leaders. One of the Judges raised up by God was a woman named Deborah, the wife of Lapidoth. She spoke for God to the people. Judges iv. 1: 'The children of Israel,' we read, 'again did evil in the sight of the Lord, and he sold them into the hand of Jabin, king of Hazor, the captain of whose hosts was Sisera . . . who had nine hundred chariots of iron, and twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel.' Deborah, the prophetess, who was judging Israel at that time, called upon Barak to raise an

army and overcome Sisera, and deliver Israel from Jabin. Barak required Deborah to go with him and she went. A great rising against Sisera took place, and the old idea of the unity of Israel came to the front, for six tribes took part in the war.

There is a very ancient poem in the Book of Judges v. 20 which tells about this war, and which says: 'The stars in their courses fought against Sisera. The river of Kishon swept them away; that ancient river, the river Kishon.' The poem goes on to praise Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, for slaying Sisera. This poem celebrates in verse what has already been recorded in the prose of the preceding chapter, namely, the complete defeat of Sisera by Barak, and the treacherous slaying of Sisera by Jael as he lay asleep secure in her hospitality in her tent. A great deal of allowance will be made for Jael's treacherous action if we understand that for twenty years the man she slew had been a cruel oppressor of the Israelites, and what was the fate of the women and children in his hands may be guessed from some words near the close of the poem. Of course Jael's treachery cannot be excused, but it can be better understood if we realise the sort of man Sisera was, and the burning indignation which no doubt prompted this woman's action.

Another celebrated man we read of in this book is Gideon, also called Jerubbaal. He was one of the greatest fighting judges of Israel. His father's name was Joash, and the two lived together in Manasseh. He lived at a very gloomy period of the national life of the Israelites; all was dark. The Israelites were prone to idolatry at the time when Gideon took them in hand. We read of him in the Bible as threshing wheat by the winepress to hide it from the Midianites, a fighting nomad race, who wandered about the country and the desert and attacked the Israelites. One of Gideon's achievements is well worth recording, if it were only for the practical lesson to be obtained from the measures he took to select his men. Gideon had collected thirty-two thousand men to meet the vast host of the Midianites. God put it into his mind to urge all, who were afraid, to return from the trysting-place at Mount Gilead. Twenty-two thousand returned to their homes. The Lord guided Gideon to feel that even the ten thousand left were too many. Then the Lord told Gideon to march his men down to the water, and the test he gave was this: Every man who threw himself down on his knees to drink, yielding to his thirst and forgetting his duty to be ready for a surprise attack, was to be rejected, and every one who lapped water from the hollow of his hand, standing erect and keeping hold of his weapons, was to be chosen. Out of the ten thousand only three hundred endured

the test and were chosen. Then Gideon planned a night attack on the Midianite camp with these three hundred men and was completely successful. The lesson of this test is important. To serve the Lord acceptably we must have self-control. A few men with self-control are better than a host without it. You cannot give yourself to the service of the Lord till you have got possession of yourself to give, that is, self-mastery.

The land of Israel after this rested in peace for forty years. Another judge and mighty man of valour was Jephthah. He was a man of Gilead. Through no fault of his, he was out of favour, but the Israelites being once more engaged in war, remembered Jephthah's high qualities. They went to fetch him out of the land of Tob, and asked him to be their captain, to fight against the Ammonites. With the king of the children of Ammon he tried his best at first to reason; to come to terms with them so as not to have to fight. He wished to prevent bloodshed, but the king of the Ammonites did not listen to this proposal. When Jephthah saw himself forced to go to war, he vowed a vow. It was this: If the Lord thought fit to deliver the children of Ammon into the hands of the children of Israel, Jephthah would show his gratitude thus: 'Whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering' (Judges xi. 31).

He went forth. The Lord heard his vow. Jephthah overwhelmed the Ammonites. But now, in the hour of victory, the greatest possible misfortune befell him. His own beloved daughter was the first to greet her father on his safe return home from battle. She had come out to congratulate her father on his success. She had timbrels which she was playing joyfully, and in the lightness of her heart she was dancing. Little did she imagine what was in store for her and for her father. Jephthah, on setting eyes on her, could not contain himself for grief and anguish. He rent his clothes, and was in despair. He felt that there was no way out of this difficulty, for he feared to fail in keeping his word given to the Lord. He had now to tell his daughter what it was he had vowed. 'Alas, my daughter, thou hast brought me very low: . . . for I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back' (Judges xi. 35).

This dutiful and brave girl thought more of her father's not going back from his promise to God than she did of her own life. She consented to die willingly. As regards this vow of Jephthah's, several thoughts occur to us. Jephthah's knowledge of God was

small, and his views of God mistaken. There had been a great falling off of religion in Israel during the time of the Judges. Jephthah seems to have regarded God with dread, but without love. He had promised the Lord to offer up to Him a burnt offering, or thanksgiving for his victory over the children of Ammon, and dreaded the vengeance the Lord would take on his country if he failed to fulfil his vow.

In those days Israel was, as we have seen, greatly demoralised by the example of heathen worship around them. To offer up a slave as a burnt offering, had the slave met him coming forth from the doors of his house, would probably have seemed quite natural and becoming to Jephthah. What he felt so sorely was that the victim claimed by his vow was his daughter, and his words to his daughter show how deeply he deplored the misfortune of her coming out to meet him. Again, it would have been far better if he had been able to trust God's goodness, confessed his error to God, and deliberately broken his vow. It never was the Lord's wish that any servant of His should commit such an heathen abomination as that of sacrificing his own child. Yet God might be pleased by the spirit of loyal devotion shown by Jephthah, and still more, surely, by that displayed by Jephthah's heroic daughter. It was Jephthah's misfortune that he lived in these days of anarchy, when the teaching of Moses was forgotten, when God's Supremacy was seen, but His loving kindness and mercy little known. When Jephthah's days were done, he was followed by other judges. The Israelites still went on transgressing, and the Lord delivered them into the hands of the Philistines. The Philistines were the most powerful oppressors of Israel, and probably came from Crete, and were not of Semitic race at all.

At this time there lived a man called Manoah and his wife. They were promised a son, and when he was born his parents called him Samson. The Lord's spirit came upon this child. When he grew up he became the strongest man in the land. His strength was supposed to be connected with the growth of his hair. As regards his character, he was a mixture; good and evil were ever fighting in him to gain the upper hand. He was dedicated to God from his birth, but, alas! he disappointed God. Called to deliver Israel from the Philistines, he thought nothing of his high calling in comparison with the gratification of his own inclinations, and married a Philistine woman.

Whenever a man swerves from God's commandments, he has to suffer the natural consequence of wrong-doing. 'What man soweth that shall he also reap.' Samson proved no exception to the rule.

We are told that one day Samson met a young lion, which he succeeded in killing as easily as if this animal had been, not the king of beasts, but a weak little goat. Some time afterwards, coming back the same way, he saw that bees had been storing honey in the carcass of the lion. Samson, being hungry, ate of the honey. Joining his friends, he gave them a riddle to guess in connection with what had occurred. 'Out of the eater came forth meat; out of the strong came forth sweetness' (Judges xiv. 14).

Samson offered a challenge to his friends, that if they expounded the meaning of this riddle he would give them thirty sheets and thirty changes of garments, but if not they should give the same to him. His Philistine wife was a very inquisitive woman, and she left him no peace until he had made known to her the answer. This deceitful woman disclosed the answer to her countrymen, and Samson was furiously angry with her. He left her, and when he returned she had been given to his companion. Then he acted thoughtlessly and cruelly. He caught a number of foxes (jackals, R.V.) and tied their tails together; he then attached burning torches to their tails, and loosed these wretched animals into the fields of the Philistines, with the object of setting fire to the standing corn, to the vineyards, and to the olives, so as to destroy everything.

Presently it was his enemies' turn to take revenge on Samson; they got hold of him and tied him down. The Bible says: 'They bound him with two new cords' (Judges xv. 13). In this pitiable condition, the spirit of the Lord came mightily down upon him. Samson was given power to tear asunder his cords, as though they were but flax. With the jawbone of an ass he slew a thousand men. He then threw it away. He became very thirsty, and called on the Lord, and said that He had given him deliverance out of the hands of his enemies, but that he would die of thirst unless the Lord gave him drink. Verse 19: 'Then God clave an hollow place that was in the jaw and there came water thereout; and when he had drunk, his spirit came again and he revived.' In our picture we see Samson looking a splendid figure, full of strength and vigorous manhood.

Samson judged Israel for twenty years. Another stirring event in his life occurred when he arrived at a place called Gaza. Here the Philistines lay in wait for him to do him harm; but he was too strong for them. 'He arose at midnight and took the doors of the gate of the city, . . . and went away with them, bar and all, and put them upon his shoulders and carried them up to the top of the hill which is before Hebron' (Judges xvi. 3).

Samson loved a woman called Delilah, who lived in the valley of Sorek. The Philistines took advantage of this love affair of Samson's, and asked her to entice him and discover to them wherein his great strength lay, and by what means they might prevail against him and make him prisoner. The Philistines offered Delilah eleven hundred pieces of silver if she succeeded. After Delilah had made three unsuccessful attempts, Samson each time mocking her, she at last succeeded in making him open his heart to her. The answer was, verse 17: 'There hath not come a razor upon my head.' Judges xvi. verse 17: '. . . if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man. . . . And she made him sleep upon her knees; and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him. And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him. But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house. Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven. Then the lords of the Philistines gathered them together for to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon their god, and to rejoice: for they said, Our god hath delivered Samson our enemy into our hand. . . . And it came to pass when their hearts were merry, that they said, Call for Samson, that he may make us sport. And they called for Samson out of the prison house; and he made them sport: and they set him between the pillars. And Samson said unto the lad that held him by the hand, Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house standeth, that I may lean upon them. Now the house was full of men and women; and all the lords of the Philistines were there; and there were upon the roof about three thousand men and women. . . . And Samson called unto the Lord, and said, O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes. And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand, and of the other with his left. And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life. Then his brethren

and all the house of his father came down, and took him, and brought him up, and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the buryingplace of Manoah his father.'

Thus died the strongest in body, but the weakest in character, of all the Judges. We read of others who followed, but we have given enough time to this book of the Bible, and must pass on to one of the sweetest stories the Bible has to tell us. It is all about an attractive and amiable young widow called Ruth. The book we have arrived at, a beautiful idyll, goes by her name. Ruth, who was a woman of the Moabites, had a loving heart. She did not wish to leave her mother-in-law alone while she was in great trouble, the latter having lost her husband as well as her two sons, one of whom had been Ruth's husband.

Naomi, the mother-in-law, thought that it was best for her to return into her own country, which she had left with her husband Elimelech, on account of famine there. Naomi arose with her two daughters-in-law, intending to go back home, because she had heard in the country of Moab that the Lord had supplied His people with bread. They went on their way to Judah. Naomi was old and unhappy, and did not wish to become a burden to others; Ruth had sympathy for her and comforted her, just because of all the trouble that the old woman was experiencing.

Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law (Ruth i. verse 8): 'Go, return each to her mother's house: the Lord deal kindly with you as ye have dealt with the dead and with me. The Lord grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept. And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people. . . . Orpah kissed her mother-in-law; but Ruth clave unto her. And she said, Behold thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister-in-law. And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go: and where thou lodgest I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me and more also if aught but death part thee and me. When she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her.'

All we have been reading about gives us something to think of. When people are poor and in distress, it does not by any means follow that they always remain unhappy. God loves and helps all people in distress if they put their trust in Him, be they rich or be they poor. Good people, such as were Naomi and Ruth, hold

communion with God. On this account such people are better able than thoughtless ones to hear God's Voice. These two women remained in the Lord's keeping: Naomi never forgot either to praise or to thank Him. They had left the country of Moab and had now arrived in Bethlehem, just at the beginning of the barley harvest, that is, the month of April.

'And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz. And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me go now to the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter. And she went and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers; and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz. . . . And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, The Lord be with you. And they answered him, the Lord bless thee. Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this?' (Ruth ii. verses 1-5).

And the servant answered and said that Naomi had come from the country of Moab, and that Ruth had asked to be allowed to gather after the reapers, that she had continued from morning till even, and that she had tarried a little while in the house. Boaz told Ruth to be sure to glean in no other field, she was not to go away, but was to hold fast by the maidens of Boaz.

Verse 9: 'Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? And when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn. Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger? And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been shewed me all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and mother, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore. The Lord recompense thy work, and the full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust. Then she said, Let me find favour in thy sight, my lord; for that thou hast comforted me; and for that thou hast spoken friendly unto thine handmaid, though I be not like unto one of thine handmaidens. And Boaz said unto her, At meal time come down hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers, and he reached her parched corn, and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left.'

Boaz commanded his young men to allow Ruth to glean wherever she liked, and not to reproach her. Handfuls were purposely put in her way. She was able to take up a great deal, and at even she went back into the city, and her mother-in-law was delighted with the amount she had gleaned. Upon asking in whose field it was, and being told the owner was Boaz, Naomi exclaimed (verse 20): 'Blessed be he of the Lord, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead.' Naomi told Ruth that Boaz was their next of kin.

Now, by all this we learn how well it is for us not to despair when trouble is upon us. How much better it is for us to be up and doing. Under no circumstances is there any excuse for us for idly wasting our precious time. This we are well taught by the beautiful story of Ruth. We are born into this world to make ourselves useful; some of us are in one condition, some of us are in another. We are not meant all to be alike. One person has more, another has less, at his or her command. These sort of differences are of no importance whatever; but, what does matter, and the thing which is required of us, is that each one of us do our duty, no matter whether it be in a high place or in a humble one, be we rich or be we poor, for outward conditions do not count in God's eyes, but God looks at the heart.

This is where many people make such big mistakes, and find life's lesson a hard one to learn. The Bible tells us God is no respecter of persons. He looks at our heart. Let us hold fast to this fact, and take comfort. Everybody is given his or her chance, and our Heavenly Father metes out to each one his allotted due. God is Justice. The Peer of the Realm has one day to give account in what way he has made use of his talents, which were lent to him by His Creator. The servant who cleans his silver and makes it shine does his duty to the Lord, if he puts his heart and soul into the work he has undertaken to perform.

From some of us it is expected that we should use our brains; others have to work with their hands. Where would be the sense of our being given a good memory, for instance, if we turn it to no good account? Or, when we are given ten useful fingers, what is the good of them unless we give them plenty to do? Idleness is against nature, and the destruction of the purpose as well as the joy of life. The Lord blesses all honest work, so long as that which we do is done in the right spirit and to the best of our power.

A humble position may be made admirable by the way the duties of it are discharged. The King on his throne has to set a good example. He and his ministers have a duty to perform to govern

wisely. A teacher of the young has to exercise patience with pupils. A farmer has to plough and to sow and to reap in order that in due season, and with God's blessing, we may have bread to eat. A little girl has to be taken down to the schoolroom to the minute, so as to start lessons punctually. A little boy at school has to learn to be truthful and honest, dutiful to his masters, and fair to his companions. He has to be taught to acquire true principles, so that all his life's journey he may have high and noble aims, and show sound judgment when he comes to act. He has to learn to be useful, kind, unselfish, and to exert himself perseveringly. Only in this way can he obtain real satisfaction out of life, and be a light to others. It is a busy world we live in; we have no time to lose.

We have spoken about the benefits of working in connection with Ruth, and now we must get back to her. Naomi had been delighted with Ruth's success. Her first idea, on seeing Ruth come back laden with good things, was to thank and praise God for all His mercies. Well she knew that it was the Lord who was bringing all this to pass. Ruth and Boaz met at the threshing-floor; there, by Naomi's advice, when Boaz lay down by the heap of corn she went and laid herself at his feet.

When Boaz noticed her, she introduced herself to him as to her near kinsman and claimed his protection, that is, that he should take her to be his wife. Boaz was very willing to give this position to so virtuous a woman, but he had to reckon first with a nearer kinsman. A very interesting transaction followed. Boaz summoned the nearer kinsman to the gate of Bethlehem to exercise his right or to refuse it, and ten men of the elders of the city as witnesses. The nearer kinsman refused to redeem it because it involved taking Ruth as his wife.

The remainder of the account of the performance of this very interesting Eastern custom may be given in the words of our book (Ruth iv. 7-12): 'Now this was the manner in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning changing, for to confirm all things; a man plucked off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbour: and this was a testimony in Israel. Therefore the kinsman said unto Boaz, Buy it for thee. So he drew off his shoe. And Boaz said unto the elders and unto all the people, Ye are witnesses this day that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi. Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren,

and from the gate of his place: ye are witnesses this day. And all the people that were in the gate, and the elders, said, We are witnesses. The Lord make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel: and do thou worthily in Ephratah, and be famous in Beth-lehem.'

And so they were married, and Ruth's firstborn son was called Obed, and Obed was the grandfather of David. And thus through David Ruth was an ancestress of Joseph, the reputed father of Christ. Naomi, to whom Ruth had been such a faithful daughter-in-law, took charge of the child and nursed him, and so her old age ended happily.

CHAPTER VII.

I SAMUEL (SAUL—DAVID).

THE book we have now to consider is called the First Book of Samuel; in the Hebrew canon the two books of Samuel are one, because the chief figure in the history recorded is one who bore that name. Shiloh was the principal sanctuary of Israel, where the Ark and the Tent of Meeting were stationed throughout the time of the Judges. Eli and his two sons were priests at Shiloh. The history set forth in the first and second books of Samuel extends over about a hundred years. In that time Israel rose out of the state of disorder and decay described in the Book of Judges, and reached the unity and strength of a true national life. The monarchy was the symbol of the nation, and had a principal part in making the nation, and so the interest centres here round the makers of the kingdom—Samuel, Saul, and David. The interest centres first round Samuel, with whom the early part of the first Book of Samuel is occupied. Samuel was the son of parents whose names were Elkanah and Hannah. They were God-fearing people. The man went up from his home every year to worship and sacrifice unto the Lord at Shiloh, the chief centre for worship. For a long while Elkanah and Hannah had wished for a son. The woman had prayed earnestly to the Lord to fulfil her wish. When the child was born, his parents made a vow that, as a token of thanksgiving, Samuel should be brought up to serve the Lord.

Hannah's song, which inspired parts of the *Magnificat*, is very beautiful. I Samuel ii. verse 1: 'My heart rejoiceth in the Lord, mine horn is exalted in the Lord: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation. There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God. Talk no more so exceeding proudly: let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed. The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength. They that were full have hired out themselves for bread; and they that were hungry ceased: so that the barren hath born seven; and she that hath many children is waxed feeble. The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The

Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he hath set the world upon them. He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail. The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them: the Lord shall judge the ends of the earth: and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed.'

Samuel means 'name of God.' His mother said she called him Samuel, because I have asked him of the Lord' (1 Samuel i. 20). 'Name of God' is surely a very beautiful name. He was one of the fortunate boys who have good parents. There is no blessing that children can have greater than the blessing of good parents. It makes all the difference whether or not we are cared for tenderly, and taught to know God, our Heavenly Father, and Jesus, who died for us, and told all about them while one is still quite young. Thus we are given the opportunity of hearing about God's mercy and goodness to all men. Have we not reason to be grieved for those children who do not enjoy a similar blessing, whose parents possibly do not lead good lives, and are therefore not able to teach their children how to turn their own lives to good account? Often it is not chiefly the fault of the wrong-doers when they sin in later life. There are many who have not been cared for at the proper time, and who have been brought up in evil surroundings with a bad example, and so know no better. What chance, we ask ourselves, can such poor little neglected children have? Our duty is to help all unfortunate people: first by our prayers, and then by our endeavours and work amongst them. Let us ask our Heavenly Father to bring about a change in their sad state.

Samuel's parents brought him up well. When he was still a small boy, they gave him to God. He ministered in the sanctuary at Shiloh before the Lord, where he had been placed in the care of the old chief priest Eli.

1 Samuel ii. verse 19: 'Moreover his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. And Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife. . . . And they went unto their own home.'

The child Samuel grew up in favour with the Lord, and also with men. We must remember for a moment that in the olden

times the Lord conversed with people on earth in the same way as now. For instance, the Lord spoke to Abraham and to Moses when they opened their hearts to the Voice of God's Holy Spirit. But for some time before the days of Samuel there had been 'no open vision,' no speech on earth of God to man, because men were deaf to His Voice. But to Samuel, because his heart was open to God, the Lord spoke and revealed Himself anew.

1 Samuel iii. verse 2: 'And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see; and ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep; that the Lord called Samuel: and he answered, Here am I. And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down.'

This happened three times. The old priest Eli knew now that it was God speaking to Samuel, and he instructed the boy to be attentive and to listen to what the Lord had to say to him. The Lord came and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel; and the boy answered, 'Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth' (1 Samuel iii. 10).

Then the Lord told Samuel that He would punish the wickedness of Eli's sons, and the weakness of Eli their father in not restraining them. Samuel told Eli, and Eli accepted humbly the decision of the Lord thus revealed.

We always picture Samuel as we see him in our own National Gallery, as a child praying and listening to the Lord's voice. 'And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord' (verses 19, 20).

In the next war we read that Israel went out against the Philistines to battle. The Israelites were smitten before the Philistines. A great misfortune befell them. The precious Ark, which represented the presence of the Unseen Heavenly King, Jehovah, had been brought out from Shiloh to aid the Israelites, and fell into the hands of their enemies, and with them it remained for seven months. Eli, the old chief priest, heard of his calamity. His two sons, the wicked priests Hophni and Phinehas, had been slain in the battle; and only too well did he realise that the glory of the Lord had departed from Israel. The sudden shock of the news of so great a disaster proved too much for the old man, for he was ninety-eight years of age. When the messenger 'made mention

of the ark of God, he fell from off the seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck brake, and he died' (1 Samuel iv. 18).

We learn from this sacred things do not protect wicked men like Eli's sons, who brought out the Ark to battle, depending on its sacredness to keep them safe. The Philistines, too, gained no advantage by their capture of the Ark. The possession of that sacred treasure brought them neither success nor satisfaction.

In course of time the wickedness of Samuel's sons, whom, when he was too old to judge Israel himself, he had appointed in his place, caused general discontent among the people, who resented being under such unjust rulers, for Samuel's sons took bribes, and gave bought judgments. At last the people assembled at Ramah and expressed a wish to have a king over them, just as all the other nations around them. 'But the thing displeased Samuel . . . and he prayed unto the Lord. And the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me and served other gods, so do they also unto thee. Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them' (1 Samuel viii. 6-9).

If the iniquity of Samuel's sons was the immediate cause of the demand for a monarch, yet it is evident that the example of other nations made the Israelites discontented with a purely religious ruler, and desirous of an earthly king. There was also the pressure of the Philistines, who at this period, and for some time after, were the most dangerous opponents of the Israelites, and made a king desirable from a military point of view. An earthly king amounted to a rejection of Jehovah, the Unseen King, who had brought them out of Egypt, and who had given them that great deliverance at the passage of the Red Sea.

Samuel gave the people full warning of the exactions they would have to endure at the hands of an earthly king, but they persisted, saying: 'Nay, but we will have a king over us; that we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.' 1 Samuel viii. verses 19, 20. Thus they forgot the Lord of Hosts who had so often helped them to victory.

Now let us ask ourselves the reason why an all-powerful God should think fit to give way to the wish of the wrong-headed

Israelites. On the face of it, this appears most strange; but with a little trouble we shall learn our lesson from this fact. God has given us free will which we can submit to His, or set up against His. We are naturally ignorant and self-willed. We must endeavour to cure ourselves of these faults. We must learn to pray not for what we think is required, but for what the Lord thinks best to send: to pray that the Lord will incline our hearts to do His Will. Not my will, but Thine, O Lord, be done. Otherwise we take too much upon ourselves, and we fall under the load. Let us pray (Psalm cxix. verse 34): 'O Lord, give me an understanding heart. Incline my heart to be obedient unto Thee. Give me faith and trust in Thee.' We cannot foretell the future, nor foresee what is best for us: God can. Therefore let us commit our ways into His Hands. The Lord promises us His help. Yet few of us accept His gracious invitation of going straight to Him and casting our burden on Him.

Continuing our Bible reading, we are told in connection with the request of the Israelites for a king, that at this time there lived a man called Kish, who was of the tribe of Benjamin. He was a mighty man of valour. He had a son whose name was Saul: 'A choice young man and a goodly' (1 Samuel ix. verse 2). In all Israel there was nobody statelier to look upon than he; and in stature he was quite the tallest. Verse 2: 'From his shoulders and upwards he was higher than any of the people.'

While reading our Bible we must give close attention, not letting our thoughts wander. It is not enough merely to read: we must try to understand the Bible. The Israelites wished for a king. The Lord directed their choice to fall upon Saul. He was chosen because he was the right man at that moment, and the best for the immediate needs of the Israelites. He was a true warrior, though a weak character, and his victories over the Ammonites soon confirmed the wisdom of God's choice.

And now we must occupy ourselves with the choosing of Saul. Kish had lost some of his asses, and he sent out his son Saul in search of them. We read of Saul passing through mount Ephraim, and other places, but nowhere did he find the lost animals. When he and his servant came to Zuph, Saul proposed they should return. They had come to an end of their provisions, but the servant advised going to the city to consult an honourable man, a man of God he had heard about. The servant said, Peradventure we can get advice and set out to find the lost animals. Saul was concerned about having no present to bring to this man. He said (verse 7): 'The bread is spent in our vessels.' The servant had

a small piece of silver on him, a quarter of a shekel, *i.e.*, about seven pence; of course this was more valuable in those days, and this they proposed to present to the man of God. Having agreed, the two sallied forth in quest of the seer, or prophet.

On their way they asked some young maidens, who were drawing water, if the prophet were at hand. They answered, Yes: but they advised Saul to make haste as the prophet was just on the point of proceeding to a high place to bless the sacrifice. Samuel (for the man of God was that good old prophet) and Saul met each other. Now the Lord had informed Samuel a day before Saul came that he would find there a man out of the land of Benjamin. This man, Samuel was to anoint captain and king over Israel, so that he might be the means of saving them from the Philistines. The Lord said that their cry of distress had reached Him. Saul drew near to Samuel, and the Lord whispered in Samuel's heart: 'Behold the man I spake to thee of: this same shall reign over my people' (1 Samuel ix. verse 17): And he gave Saul the joyful news not to occupy his mind about the lost asses, because they had been found. Samuel greeted Saul saying (verse 20): 'And on whom is all the desire of Israel? Is it not on thee and on all thy father's house?' Saul answered, how could that possibly be, seeing that he was a Benjamite of the smallest of the tribes. And now we have come to the sacrificial feast which was followed by the anointing of Saul.

1 Samuel ix. verse 22: 'And Samuel took Saul and his servant, and brought them into the parlour, and made them sit in the chiefest place among them that were bidden, which were about thirty persons. And Samuel said unto the cook, Bring the portion which I gave thee, of which I said unto thee, Set it by thee. And the cook took up the shoulder, and that which was upon it, and set it before Saul. And Samuel said, Behold that which is left! set it before thee, and eat: for unto this time has it been kept for thee since I said, I have invited the people. So Saul did eat with Samuel that day. And when they were come down from the high place into the city, Samuel communed with Saul upon the top of the house. And they rose early: and it came to pass about the spring of the day that Samuel called Saul to the top of the house, saying, Up, that I may send thee away. And Saul arose, and they went out both of them, he and Samuel abroad. And as they were going down to the end of the city, Samuel said to Saul, Bid the servant pass on before us (and he passed on), but stand thou still awhile, that I may shew thee the word of God. Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and

kissed him, and said, Is it not because the Lord hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?’

Samuel called the people together unto the Lord near Mizpeh. Here he addressed them, and put the fact nakedly before them that they had rejected the Lord from being their King. They were called upon to present themselves before the Lord, by their tribes and by their thousands. Saul could nowhere be found. He had hidden himself ‘among the stuff’ (*i.e.*, the baggage). They ran and fetched him, and when he stood among the people he was higher than any of them, from his shoulders and upwards. Samuel said unto the children of Israel, See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen, and everybody shouted, and said, God save the king (1 Samuel x. 24), words now familiar to us in our National Anthem, which were evidently derived from this passage.

1 Samuel x. verse 25: ‘Then Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book, and laid it up before the Lord. And Samuel sent all the people away, every man to his house. And Saul also went home to Gibeah; and there went with him a band of men whose hearts God had touched. (xi. 15). ‘And all the people went to Gilgal; and there they made Saul king before the Lord; and there they sacrificed sacrifices of peace offerings before the Lord; and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly.’

Saul, very early in his reign, became extremely popular, because he was successful in battle against Nahash and the army of the Ammonites at the siege of Jabesh-gilead, besides leading the Israelites to victory on other occasions. By divine authority he was commissioned to go against the Amalekites. These people had transgressed in their conduct towards the Israelites. Vengeance was to be taken upon them for this. Saul disobeyed God’s commands. He twice failed in this way. By disobedience he brought upon himself God’s displeasure. He forgot that he was reigning as King of Israel by the Will of God.

Samuel twice reproved him; but it was in vain. The sentence of rejection was passed upon him. Samuel’s significant saying (1 Samuel xv. 22): ‘To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams,’ expresses the lesson of this particular occurrence, the sparing of the king of the Amalekites and the best of the spoil.

The Lord commanded Samuel to stop mourning over Saul. He had been rejected, and God Himself had provided another king for the Israelites. He ordered Samuel to go to Jesse, the Bethlehemite, and the prophet came to Jesse to Bethlehem. One after

another of Jesse's sons were brought in for Samuel, the man of God, by God's direction, to select from. Here we read that statement illustrative of what we have been talking about. The Lord guided Samuel's judgment thus: 'Look not on his countenance, nor on the height of his stature; . . . for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart' (1 Samuel xvi. 7).

God values the inner man. Oftentimes the Lord thinks fit to choose the weak, the young, the plain, the insignificant, to be instruments in His Hands for bringing wonderful things to pass. Both men and animals are used by Him to carry out His wise purposes. The Bible distinctly tells us that 'the first shall be last, and the last shall be first' (Matthew xx. 16). We are also told that 'Many are called, but few are chosen.'

For the new king God chose the very youngest and least experienced of all Jesse's sons. The youth was absent, feeding his father's flocks; they sent for him and brought him. 'He was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the Lord said, Arise, and anoint him; for this is he. Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward' (1 Samuel xvi. 12, 13). Here was a plain shepherd-boy called to the highest place in the land.

We read in another passage of the First Book of Samuel xvi. 21: 'And David came to Saul, and stood before him: and he loved him greatly; and he became his armourbearer. And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, Let David, I pray thee, stand before me; for he hath found favour in my sight. And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.'

Now we have once more to give our attention to the Philistines. They were determined to conquer the Israelites. They gathered together their armies to battle near a place called Shochoh, which belonged to Judah. Saul and the men of Israel were gathered together and pitched by the valley of Elah, and set the battle in array against the Philistines. These stood on a mountain on the one side, and the Israelites stood on a mountain on the other side, and there was a valley between them. We read that there went a champion out of the camp of the Philistines, whose name was Goliath, of Gath. He was a giant, 9½ feet high. On his head he had a helmet of brass. He was armed with a coat of mail, which was very heavy. On his legs he had greaves of brass (brass means

copper), and between his shoulders was a target of brass (R.V. javelin). The staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam. Thus equipped, he came out and shouted his challenge to the army of Israel.

Goliath stands before us in our picture. This is the kind of man an Italian artist believed Goliath had been. Poor Goliath! Perhaps it would please him little to know that thus he is shaped in marble, and handed down to us on the pavement of a glorious cathedral; but that is where we find him in a town called Siena, and very beautiful it all is there.

The Philistines put all their trust in their giant and his great strength; they imagined that all would be well with them. We shall see how utterly mistaken they were. They were heathens, and in consequence did not take the Lord into consideration. Their trust was not in the true God. God is stronger than any man. This fact the Philistines did not remember. It is the Lord who can turn the weakest into the strongest, if it be His Will. The children of Israel were terrified at the giant, and nobody had any heart to go against him. The giant stood forth and renewed his challenge to the army of Israel. They were asked to choose a man and send him down to meet Goliath, who was boastful and perfectly self-confident. The Israelites were dismayed and greatly afraid. The three elder sons of Jesse had followed Saul to battle. David, being the youngest, was feeding his father's flocks at Bethlehem. Jesse bade David take parched corn to the camp for his brethren; he was also to carry cheeses to the captain of their thousand.

David rose up early in the morning and left the sheep with a keeper, and he took the provisions and arrived at the trench (barricade of waggons) just as the people were going forth to fight, and were shouting for the battle. David left his baggage in the hand of the keeper of the baggage, and ran into the army and saluted his brethren; and as he was talking to them, up came the giant Goliath. David made inquiries as to the state of the war: he weighed all, he made up his mind; he presented himself to Saul and said (1 Samuel xvii. 32): 'Let no man's heart fail because of him (*i.e.*, Goliath); thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine.'

God's call had come to David. All were amazed; he, to offer to fight against such odds. He, a mere boy, with no experience in warfare! He seemed unlikely to be of the slightest use. He was judged to be too daring; he was rebuked, and his offer was refused. Undaunted, he persisted. He urged that his past life

had qualified him for this task. Living out, as he had done, in God's beautiful open fresh air, he had become strong and healthy in body and in mind. While tending his sheep he had practised slinging till he had reached great perfection as a slinger; his eye had become so true, his hand so sure, that there was nothing within the range of a sling that could escape his aim. He told Saul that one day a lion and a bear had taken a lamb out of his father's flocks; and he had slain both the wild beasts, and he was sure this Philistine also would fall before him. David stood up erect, and calm, and determined. He declared that he had no fear whatsoever, for he felt the Lord's protection. Saul was thus persuaded to agree, and to say that David was to be allowed to go forward. Verse 37: 'Go, and the Lord be with thee,' were King Saul's parting words.

Here he is in our book as an early Italian painter has pictured him for us. The immortal Gaddi has painted him on a pillar, which supports, along with many others, the roof of the finest church in Florence, called St. Croce. We often used to go and see David there, and gaze long and lovingly on this boy as we wandered round and round this hallowed place, feasting our eyes on so much beauty.

David's first idea was to arm himself as a warrior ready for battle. He allowed Saul to put on him his armour, and a helmet of brass upon his head, and also a coat of mail. David then girded his sword upon his armour, and thus he assayed to go forth. But he felt out of his element in such equipment; he felt he had no experience of the arms and the armour. David said to Saul (verse 39), 'I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them;' *i.e.*, he had never used such weapons. So he put them all away. He took instead his staff in his hand, and he chose five smooth stones out of the brook, which he put into a shepherd's bag. In his hand was a sling, and he felt at ease and master of his weapon. Above all, his faith in the Lord was firm.

When he thus appeared on the scene, naturally not only the Israelites but also the Philistines were astonished, and Goliath utterly disdained David, who pointed out to him that, whereas Goliath came armed, relying on sword and spear and shield, he (David) came relying upon the God of Israel, and the Lord's help had been promised to him and to the children of Israel. Verse 45: 'I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee. . . . that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.'

The single combat began. The giant bore down upon David. The latter took a stone, slung it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, so that he fell to the earth upon his face. All this had been done with a stone. David had no sword in his hand. He ran and stood upon the Philistine, and took his sword and drew it out of its sheath, and slew him and cut off his head with it. As soon as the Philistines saw that their champion was dead they fled. The men of Israel and Judah shouted and pursued the Philistines into the valley and up to the gates of Ekron. The wounded Philistines lay all over the country. The children of Israel spoiled their tents, and David took the head of the giant and brought it to Saul, and afterwards to Jerusalem. His armour he put into his tent. Women came out of all cities of Israel to accompany David, singing and dancing with joy, to meet King Saul, with tabrets and with instruments of music. And as they went along they sang to one another, 'Saul has slain his thousands, but David his ten thousands' (1 Samuel xviii. 7). Saul was very angry at this. He said, What more can he have but the kingdom? And Saul eyed David from that day and forward.

As we look at our picture we are struck with the pensive face of David. He does not exult in his success, nor allow himself to be flushed or excited by victory: he has complete control over himself even at this youthful period of his life, and serious thoughts are occupying his mind concerning the future of his countrymen. Jonathan, the king's son, watched David speaking to his father, and at first sight the souls of these two young men embraced and were knit in an eternal friendship. They became friends for the rest of their lives. David and Jonathan were as one soul, and the latter stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and of his garment and even of his sword, and his bow and his girdle, and gave them all to David as tokens of friendship. David behaved himself wisely in every way. Saul set him over the men of war, and everybody accepted his leadership: he was made much of on account of his success.

Soon we read that Saul became very jealous of him on this account. Verse 10: 'And it came to pass on the morrow that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul.' He tried to kill David. Saul cast a javelin to smite David against the wall with it. David was nimble and sprang aside, thereby avoiding the deadly stroke. David married Saul's daughter, Michal; but Saul remained his enemy all the while. David saw himself forced to flee from Saul's presence. On one occasion David's wife was the means of saving his life, for she let David down through a window, and he fled and

escaped. Michal took an image and laid it in the bed, and put a pillow of goat's hair for his bolster, and covered it with a cloth. Saul missed David, and sent to the house in quest of him. When Saul's messenger found out what Michal had done, Saul was angry at being deceived; but Michal said he had no cause to kill David, and Saul had to give up his evil project for the time.

On several occasions Jonathan, David's bosom friend, helped David when Saul was pursuing him. These two young men used to meet in the woods and in the fields, unknown to Saul. The Book of Samuel tells us the following incident. Once Jonathan said to David that, to-morrow being a new moon, Saul would miss David because his seat would be empty. Jonathan promised David to try his best to remove his father's anger against him. He said he would give him a sign to show whether he could return or not, according to how matters stood. The sign was to be that Jonathan was to shoot some arrows, and then he was to send a lad to pick up the arrows. If Jonathan shot the arrows short of the lad, and said (1 Samuel, xx. 21), 'Behold the arrows are on this side of thee. Take them,' it was to signify that Saul had spent his wrath, and that it was safe for David to return. But if Jonathan sent the arrows beyond the lad, and said to him, 'Behold, the arrows are beyond thee' (verse 22), it was a danger signal. This meant that David's life was in peril at the hands of Saul. Jonathan went out to see David once more before they parted. He gave the danger signal, and, after the lad was gone, David came out from his hiding place and the friends kissed each other and wept together, and made a promise of eternal fidelity, not only between themselves but between their children. This was their last farewell.

In the course of David's flight after one of his escapes he came to Samuel to Ramah, and told him all that Saul had done to him, and he and Samuel went and dwelt at Naioth, *i.e.*, 'the house of learning,' the college or school of the prophets just outside Ramah. Samuel, the first of the prophets as well as the last of the judges, seems to have had a great deal to do with the training of the college of the prophets.

David now goes to Nob, and visits Abimelech the priest. David pretends that he has a business to attend to for the king, and on this account, having no provisions, he asks the priest to give him five loaves of bread in his hand, or what bread there might happen to be available. The priest tells David that he has no common bread, that there is only hallowed bread. David assures him that he has led a virtuous life, and that, therefore, the hallowed bread, the shewbread (bread of the presence) could be safely given to him.

David had to depart, and took refuge with Achish, the king of Gath, but he could not venture to remain there. He wandered on and came to the cave of Adullam, where every one who was in distress or debt joined him, till he had four hundred men. Thence he went to Mizpeh, to the king of Moab, where he had his father and mother with him. By this time Saul had discovered where David was. The giving of the shewbread had reached the king's ears, and Saul slew with the sword by the hand of Doeg the Edomite all the priests of Nob for befriending David.

David remained hidden away in the wilderness and in strongholds, such as Engedi, hiding in the mountains as best he could; Saul seeking him all the time. But God preserved David from his enemy's pursuit.

In the meanwhile, Saul had to fight with his old foes, the Philistines. No sooner was the fighting over than he again went in pursuit of David in the wilderness of Engedi.

I Samuel xxiv. verse 2: 'Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats (*i.e.*, cliffs). And he came to the sheepcotes by the way where there was a cave; and Saul went in to cover his feet: and David and his men remained in the side of the cave.'

It thus came to pass that the Lord delivered Saul into the hands of David. Saul lay there asleep in the cave in Engedi. Here was an opportunity given to David of taking revenge; but this was far from his thoughts. He went into the cave and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe, to show him afterwards in order to convince him, on his awakening, that David had spared his life. David assured his men (verse 6): 'The Lord forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him.' Saul rose up and left the cave and went his way. David called after him, and, on telling Saul what had happened, the latter was much overcome and wept, and was ashamed of himself. He thanked David, and said that now he was convinced of David's goodness and of his own wickedness. Saul exclaimed (verse 20): 'And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel will be established in thine hand.' David had repaid good for evil; a remarkable practical anticipation of our Lord's example and teaching, which goes far to show why David was a man after God's own heart.

We now hear of David wandering on to the wilderness of Paran. Here he encountered a man in Maon, whose possessions were in Carmel. The man was a great stockowner, rich in sheep and goats, and it was shearing-time. He was called Nabal, and his wife was

called Abigail. 1 Samuel xxv. 3: 'She was of good understanding and of a beautiful countenance.' Nabal 'was churlish and evil in his doings.' He was of the house of Caleb, whom we remember at the time of Joshua, the one who had been his travelling companion into Canaan, and who had helped him to carry the huge bunch of grapes from Eshcol. David had always been civil to the men of Nabal, and therefore felt no compunction in asking Nabal to give him some provisions, but the latter answered curtly: 'Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? There be many servants now a days that break away every man from his master. Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men whom I know not whence they be' (1 Samuel xxv. 10).

David resented such treatment. An outlaw chief with now six hundred outlaws at his back, he could have seized with ease and without asking leave from any one all Nabal's possessions, and in his great moderation he only asked for a little food. His request was (verse 8): 'Give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand to thy servants and to thy son David.' He commanded his men to gird on every man his sword. Two hundred went up and two hundred men abode by the baggage. This came to the ears of Abigail. One of the young men told Abigail (verse 14): 'Behold David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master, and he railed upon them' (*i.e.*, flew upon them). 'But the men were very good unto us, and we were not hurt, neither missed we anything . . . they were a wall unto us both by night and by day' (*i.e.*, a protection from Bedouin robbers).

Abigail saw no reason why the two men should not come to terms. She made haste and took two hundred loaves and two bottles or skins of wine, and five sheep ready dressed, and five measures of parched corn, and an hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid them on asses. 'She said to her servants, Go on before me; behold, I come after you. But she told not her husband Nabal. And it was so as she rode on the ass that she came down by the covert of the hill, and behold, David and his men came down against her. . . . And when Abigail saw David, she hasted and lighted off the ass, and fell before David on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and fell at his feet, and said, Upon me, my lord, let this iniquity be: and let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak in thine audience . . . a man is risen to pursue thee, and to seek thy soul: but the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God;

and the souls of thine enemies, them shall he sling out, as out of the middle of a sling' (1 Samuel xxv. 19-29).

Such are the words Abigail speaks to David. She goes on to say that David had done no harm to Nabal, and that she recognised in David the man chosen by God to be ruler over Israel. She said that David had refrained from shedding blood causelessly. She had asked David not to think of Nabal any more, because folly was in him. Nabal was given to drink, and this was the cause of his death. David says to Abigail (verse 33): 'Blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with my own hand. For in very deed, as the Lord God of Israel liveth, which hath kept me back from hurting thee, except that thou hadst hastened and come to meet me, surely there had not been left to Nabal by the morning light a single man. So David received of her hand that which she had brought him, and said unto her, Go up in peace to thine house. See I have hearkened to thy voice, and have accepted thy person.'

After Nabal's death the servants of David came to Carmel and told her that David had sent them to seek her to be his wife. She arose and bowed herself on her face to the earth, and said (verse 41): 'Behold, let thine handmaid be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord.' Abigail hastened and rode upon an ass, with five of her damsels following her; and she went with the messengers of David and became his wife. This is an interesting episode in David's life as an outlaw.

But we must get back to Saul and see what happened next. After David's having spared his life, one would be inclined to think that Saul would have learnt his lesson, and mended his wicked ways. This was not the case. Saul continued to pursue David. Soon Saul was again at the mercy of David. Saul was in a trench (rather 'amid the wagons') asleep, 'the people pitched round about him' (1 Samuel xxvi. verse 5), at the hill of Hachilah before Jeshimon. His spear was stuck in the ground at his bolster, and his cruse of water was beside him. Both of these David took away, again as a proof to show how easily he could have killed Saul.

David turned a deaf ear to the proposal of Abishai (verse 8): 'Let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear even to the earth at once (R.V. at one stroke) and I will not smite him the second time.' David rebuked Abishai and said (verse 11): 'The Lord forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the Lord's anointed. . . . So David took the spear and the cruse of water from Saul's bolster; and they gat them away.' And David went

over to the other side, and stood on the top of the hill, a great space being between them, and called and reproached Saul first, and then showed him the spear and the cruse he had taken. David again showed Saul how he had spared his life, and how unjustly Saul was seeking his life. Saul acknowledged his wrong-doing and said (verse 21): 'I have sinned . . . behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly.' Saul ended up by saying (verse 25): 'Blessed be thou, my son David. Thou shalt both do great things, and also shalt still prevail.'

David did not accept Saul's invitation to return, for he no longer trusted him, and they parted never to meet again. Saul upon hearing that David had gone to Gath, left off pursuing him. Meanwhile the Philistines gathered themselves together and pitched in Shunem, and Saul gathered all his men together and pitched in Gilboa. Saul began to feel the pangs of a guilty conscience; and he was sore afraid. He inquired of the Lord, but received no answers, either by dreams or prophets. He was most melancholy, and he knew full well that he had forfeited the Lord's protection. In his oppressed condition of mind, the last thing he could think of was to seek and question a witch, though he had himself put away those who had familiar spirits and the wizards out of the land.

This woman belonged to a place called Endor. 1 Samuel xxvii. 8: 'Saul disguised himself, and put on other raiment, and he went, and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night.' The woman who had a familiar spirit (we would say a medium, LXX. says a ventriloquist) was unable to give him any comfort. Saul's only companions were his self-reproaches and his pangs of conscience. Saul asked the woman (verse 11): 'Bring me up Samuel.' When the woman saw Samuel, she recognised Saul, and said to him (verse 12): 'Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul.' And Saul asked the woman (verse 14): 'What form is he of? And she said, An old man cometh up; and he is covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived that it was Samuel.' Probably the 'witch' described Samuel, and spoke his words.

Samuel warned Saul of his impending overthrow. Saul had not eaten bread all day or all night, and fell straightway all along the earth at the words of the supposed Samuel. Probably the witch of Endor (the ventriloquist), recognised in Saul's coming to her by night (against his own laws to stop necromancy), and in his depression and terror that he was hard pressed by the Philistines, and that he knew that he was not likely to emerge from the conflict with his life. Incidentally this throws light on the belief of the Israelites in a future life at that time. Saul, a rough, uneducated

warrior, believed in the life of the dead in the dark under-world of 'Sheol,' but did not regard going to Sheol as anything but a disaster.

The end soon came. The Philistines fought against Israel. The Israelites were defeated, and many fell slain in battle on mount Gilboa. The Philistines slew three of Saul's sons, one of whom was Jonathan. The battle went sore against the Israelites. The archers hit Saul, and he was severely wounded. Saul implored his armour-bearer to thrust his sword through him, and put an end to his sufferings; but the man's heart failed him; so Saul took his own sword and fell upon it. Thus came to a direful end the warrior king and his family. Saul brought misery on himself, on his children, and on all the Israelites. It is the old, old story which is ever new: people cannot learn obedience from long centuries of others' experiences: they cannot remember that the wages of disobedience are disaster and death.

We see that the request of the Israelites to have a king had not brought blessings on them. They had to pay for their wilfulness. In the First Book of Samuel we learn that the prophet Samuel, after he had come to be a very old man, died. He was honestly and deeply mourned by the children of Israel. In spite of their having chosen to have a king, Samuel had played a great part in Israel. In spite of his objections to the abandonment of the spiritual Kingship of God, he did more than any one to establish the monarchy. Guided by God, he chose and anointed the first two kings, Saul and David. He had himself long exercised ruling powers as a judge over Israel. He was the best and the greatest of the Judges, and the first of the Prophets. He welded together into a nation the scattered and disunited tribes.

He made religion a reality by founding the order of the prophets or speakers for God, who moved men to keep the old Mosaic faith as the priests had long ceased to do. The order of prophets, or preachers, went through the land from shrine to shrine, somewhat as mission preachers go from church to church in modern times. To Samuel the life of the nation seemed to be founded on fidelity to God; and the colleges of prophets which he established had a national purpose as well as a religious purpose.

CHAPTER VIII.

II. SAMUEL (DAVID).

WE have now come to the Second Book of Samuel. The first chapter begins with a vivid account of the arrival of an Amalekite bringing the news of the death of Saul and Jonathan, and with a glimpse of David's exceeding grief on hearing of the death of King Saul and of his beloved friend Jonathan. David rent his clothes, the outward and visible sign of mourning. David's lamentation for Saul and Jonathan is very touching and full of true poetry, the poetry of one who had yet to win a great reputation by his Psalms. The concluding lines of the poem are full of the aching void of a great love lost. 2 Samuel i. verses 26, 27: 'I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women. How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!'

After Saul's death, Abner, Saul's chief officer, set up Ishbosheth, Saul's son, as king over Israel, and there was civil war till Ishbosheth was slain by two of his captains. After this all the tribes came to Hebron to David to ask him to be king. 2 Samuel v. 1-9: 'We are thy bone and thy flesh. Also in time past, when Saul was king over us, thou wast he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel . . . and King David made a league with them in Hebron before the Lord; and they anointed David king over Israel. David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years. In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months: and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty and three years. . . . And the king and his men went to Jerusalem unto the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land. . . . So David dwelt in the fort and called it the city of David. And David built round about from Millo and inward.'

David never forgot Jonathan. We read in 2 Samuel ix. 1 of a very touching incident about this lasting love. David says: 'Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?' Ziba, a servant of theirs, came forward and said that Jonathan had yet a son left who was lame on his feet. David had him fetched out of the house of Macher, the son of Ammiel, from Lodebar, where he was living. Mephibosheth—for that was the lame man's name—fell on his face before David, and made obeisance to him. The latter told him not to fear; that

he would, on Jonathan's account, restore to him all the land that belonged to Saul. David told Mephibosheth that he should eat of David's bread at his table continually. The poor lame man answered that he was but a dead dog for David to show him so much kindness. Ziba and his family remained servants in Mephibosheth's household.

Anybody who visits Jerusalem to-day can still clearly distinguish the different ages of the work of the tower of David. There you see nearest the ground the huge stones which the Jebusites employed for their building. On the top of their work you trace the smaller bricks employed by the workers in the time of David. 2 Samuel v. 10: 'David went out and grew great, and the Lord God of hosts was with him. And Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and cedar trees, and carpenters, and masons: and they built David an house. And David perceived that the Lord had established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for his people Israel's sake.'

David arose and went with all the people, thirty thousand men, to bring from Judah the Ark of God up to Zion. 2 Samuel vi. 5: 'David and all the house of Israel played before the Lord on all manner of instruments made of fir wood, even on harps and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals.' David thus brought up the ark to Zion in safety.

Thus far David had been a true servant of God. At this time he was tempted from the path of duty. David was but a man, and therefore was not perfect. He did that which was wrong in the sight of God. He took to himself a woman he ought not to have taken, who was called Bathsheba, and he afterwards made her his wife. She was a married woman, and her husband Uriah was a faithful soldier of the King; and his death was deliberately arranged by treachery of the king, and complicity of Joab his general, in order to free Bathsheba from her husband, so that David might be able to marry her. This was clearly a most wicked thing to do, and David had to bear the consequences of his sin. The Lord brought it home to his conscience by means of His prophet. Nathan, the prophet, was a trusted adviser of the king. The Lord sent him to the king, and made him speak in a parable. This means that he told him a story, in order to bring what he had done home to his mind.

Nathan said (2 Samuel xii. 1): 'There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds: but the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it

grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him: but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him. And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die: and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.'

So far David had shown the greatest interest in this story. Little did he think what was coming. Nathan looked him full in the face and said (verse 7), 'Thou art the man!' He reminded David that the Lord had made him King over Israel; that He had delivered David out of the hand of Saul; that He had given him the house of Israel and of Judah; and that he had blessed him in every way. David had not realised how rich he was in blessings, and had taken a poor man's wife. Nathan goes on to tell David how great is the evil he has done in the sight of God by killing Uriah the Hittite with the sword of the children of Ammon, and then taking his wife to be his own wife. Nathan tells David that on this account the sword shall never depart from his house; that David had disgraced Uriah secretly, but the Lord would bring disgrace and dishonour upon him publicly before all Israel, and before the sun. David's and Bathsheba's child died, and David had brought a beginning of misery upon himself and his home. We read of his sons falling out among themselves, brother slaying brother, and one of them conspiring against his own father, so that there was strife and bloodshed in his family.

Now we have to continue the history of David's punishment, and learn what unhappiness he had prepared for himself. Amongst his many sons there was one in particular called Absalom, whom he loved most tenderly. He was beautiful and attractive and a popular favourite, and was distinguished by his very long hair. This son caused his father David his greatest sorrow. Absalom had killed his brother Amnon in revenge for his ill-usage of his sister and fled to Geshur, the kingdom of his grandfather. Joab acted as an intermediary to induce the king to forgive Absalom, and brought him back to Jerusalem. There Absalom dwelt two years without seeing the king's face, because he had murdered his brother. At last the king forgave Absalom, and received him back into favour. Absalom now used his position to win the hearts of the people from the king. After four years' time Absalom judged that the

moment had come to strike. He asked the king's leave to go to Hebron to offer a sacrifice to the Lord, and he said, 'Go in peace' (2 Samuel xv. 9). At Hebron he raised the standard of rebellion. He had already sent secret emissaries throughout all Israel, saying (verse 10): 'As soon as ye hear the sound of the trumpet, then ye shall say, Absalom reigneth in Hebron.' That is to say, he was to be proclaimed king simultaneously all over the land.

The bad news reached David, and he at once decided to flee with his servants from Jerusalem. An episode of the flight throws light on the character of David. David had a bodyguard of Philistines, which came after him from Gath, and the commander was a distinguished Philistine, Ittai the Gittite. David, about to fly, thought of the safety of Ittai and his bodyguard, and advised Ittai to leave him and join Absalom. This was a very generous offer, depriving David of the best of the few men who still held to him, and a very thoughtful, delicate act of unselfishness which made it easy for Ittai to join Absalom without the slightest reflection on his fidelity to David. But Ittai was equal to the king in magnanimity. He answered (verse 21): 'As the Lord liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be.' The king's generosity had strengthened Ittai's devotion, and instead of losing his bodyguard David had them with him, heart and soul, however dark his prospects. Here we see the secret of David's extraordinary success in dealing with men. He appealed to what was best in them by showing them what was best in himself.

When David heard that Ahithophel was among the conspirators with Absalom, he was dismayed, and he asked his friend, Hushai, to join Absalom, and do his best to defeat the counsel of Ahithophel. Hushai was successful, and persuaded Absalom and the elders of Israel who were with him not to follow the wise advice of Ahithophel, who asked for twelve thousand men to pursue David that very night, and cut him off at once. When Ahithophel saw his counsel was not followed, he went home and hanged himself, knowing all hope of success was gone. The king retired to Mahanaim, on the other side of Jordan, and there gathered an army. He consented against his will to let his army go out against Absalom's army, while he himself remained at Mahanaim. The battle took place in the wood of Ephraim. David's men completely defeated Absalom's men, and twenty thousand of the latter were slain. 2 Samuel xviii. 9: 'Absalom met the servants of David, and Absalom rode on a mule' (a sign of his kingship), 'the mule went under the thick boughs of a great oak and his head caught hold of the oak, and he

was taken up between the heaven and the earth; and the mule that was under him went away.' The news that he was hanging in an oak was brought to Joab. He blamed his informant for not killing him, and went himself with three darts in his hand, and thrust them through the heart of Absalom while he was still alive in the midst of the oak, and the ten young men who bore Joab's armour finished the slaughter.

Our picture is most interesting. We find it on the same pavement of the cathedral in Siena where we already found the Philistine giant, Goliath. We see the cruel warriors spearing the helpless man, and we catch a glimpse of the last half of the mule slowly disappearing riderless. David had given special orders, before his army went out to battle, to Joab, Abishai, and Ittai (verse 5): 'Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom.' The whole army was dismayed, and 'all Israel fled, every man to his tent' (verse 17), for they had all heard David's order. Two messengers were sent with the news, Ahimaaz and an Ethiopian slave of Joab's. Ahimaaz arrived first, and found David, in his eagerness, sitting between the two gates in the gateway of the city, anxiously awaiting news from the army. He called to the king 'All is well' (verse 28), and fell on his face before the king, and said that God had delivered up the rebels. The king had only one thought in his heart and one question on his lips (verse 29): 'Is the young man Absalom safe?' Ahimaaz did not know. Then the Ethiopian arrived and said (verse 31): 'Tidings, my lord the king: for the Lord hath avenged thee this day of all them that rose up against thee.' And the king said to the Ethiopian: 'Cushi' (*i.e.*, the man of Cush, Cush being Ethiopia), verse 32: 'Is the young man Absalom safe?' Then Cushi (*i.e.*, the Ethiopian) answered: 'The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against thee do thee hurt, be as that young man is.' And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate and wept. And as he went thus he said: 'O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God that I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!' (2 Samuel xviii. 33).

Here we have the completion of David's punishment; the results that had followed out of the sin with Bathsheba. Absalom's adviser in his rebellion was Ahithophel, the grandfather of Bathsheba. We can see that David had brought all this upon himself, though it was equally true that it was God's judgment for his sin, the gradual working of God's inexorable moral law. Yet for the moment all that David seems to have thought of was his son, his lost son, and the contrast between what was and what might have been.

Before going on with any more of the history of David, it will

be well to have a little talk together about something the Bible speaks of. We know it is said in the Bible concerning David that he was a man after God's own heart. When we realise that he sinned much as others did before and after him, we cannot but pause to think why the Bible distinctly calls David a man after God's own heart. By no means let us lose our chance of ascertaining what this signifies. God loved sinful David. We know that he strayed from God's commandments. Through trials he had to be purified. Instead of allowing our surprise to run away with us, let us have comfort and hope from the fact that the Lord considers sinful David worthy of so high regard. God does not cast him out as worthless; no, indeed, God has infinite patience with him. David's sin was just the very means of his returning to God. David feels his utter inability to work out his own salvation. Only by bringing his heavy burden to the Lord was it possible for help to come to him.

We know David's feelings, the progress of his consciousness of sin, and his repentance, and his growth of love and trust in God, for we have a wonderful record of these in his Psalms. How great, then, is our consolation; we who are ordinary mortals, and far weaker even than David. What a wonderful thing it is for us to know that our Heavenly Father looks down in pity upon us, and is ready to pick us up when we fall, and to give each one of us a new start. There is a wise old proverb that says, 'It is never too late to mend;' and Tennyson, with even deeper insight, writes, 'Men may rise on stepping stones of their dead selves to higher things.'

A glance at David's character will give us a deeper insight into the reasons for accepting him as the man after God's own heart. Dean Stanley, an excellent judge of character, says, 'In the complexity of the elements, passion, tenderness, generosity, fierceness—the soldier, the shepherd, the poet—the statesman, the priest, the prophet, the king—the romantic friend, the chivalrous leader, the devoted father—there is no character in the Old Testament at all to be compared to that of David.'

Thomas Carlyle, in his *Heroes and Hero Worship*, says 'David had fallen into sins enough—blackest crimes; there was no want of sins. And thereupon the unbelievers sneer and ask, "Is this your man according to God's own heart?" The sneer, I must say, seems to me but a shallow one. What are faults? What are the outward details of a life if the inner secret of it—the remorse, temptations (often baffled), never-ended struggle of it, be forgotten? David's life and history, as written for us

in those psalms of his, I consider to be the truest emblem ever given of a man's moral progress and warfare here below. All earnest souls will recognise in it the faithful struggle of an earnest human soul towards what is good and best. Struggle often baffled, sore baffled, down as into entire wreck; yet a struggle never ended; ever with tears, with repentance, true unconquerable purpose, begun anew.'

How often do we see people who are blessed with happiness taking this happiness as a matter of course. We ourselves forget to thank God for mercies we enjoy daily, which though we take them as a matter of course, are mercies all the same. Our sight, our hearing, our health, we take all in the most matter-of-fact way, merely as our right. There are others who have to forego many of life's most coveted blessings; and these are often much the better for their education of denial. God wishes us never to forget Him. We are not meant to expect happiness, but we are to be thankful when it comes to us. In just the same way we are to be thankful when the Lord sends us the discipline of troubles. To God we are to turn in gratitude for everything, be it pleasant or be it that which tries us, and which is sent for our good just the same. David was being educated, and each event in his life was a step onwards and upwards, faltering as was his gait. A thing which is easily won affords us no opportunity for lasting benefit. What does us good in the getting is something got with difficulty, something which brings out our courage, our endurance, our perserverance, and which acts on our character like a tonic on our constitution. It is in battling against the flesh and the powers of darkness that we daily become stronger, and, step by step, are able to climb up the steep hill and walk in the narrow way, thus becoming more acceptable in the eyes of our loving Heavenly Father.

We may rest assured without question that it is by no means happiness or misery which makes or mars us. It is far more what we make of the given circumstances and conditions of our life which works a blessing on us. 'All things,' says the Bible, 'work together for good to them that love God' (Romans viii. 28). Come what may, we ought to be able to realise this more and more. Thus we arrive at our conclusions. It was because David realised his position towards God that he put his whole trust in the Lord, and on this account the Lord looked upon David with favour, as one in His special care and keeping. We hear how fond David was of music. He is called the sweet singer of Israel, the sweet psalmist. The spirit of the Lord spoke to him, and His Word was in David's mouth. He was a great poet, too. We have already read and

admired some of his poetry, some lines of his fine elegy on the death of his enemy Saul and of his friend Jonathan. God had endowed him with lovely qualities, and had given him a wonderful manysidedness. His life was a rich one and an interesting one.

All men are sinful: even the great ones, patriarchs, lawgivers, judges, kings, prophets, all transgress the moral law. While on the one hand we deplore it, on the other hand it is for our encouragement. We learn that the people in the Bible are not different from us in nature. We learn that if there was help and hope in store for them, surely the same is not denied to us who are of the present day. The old familiar Bible characters have everything in common with us who live to-day. We have every reason to take courage. But instead of judging the people of those days harshly for sinning, let us acknowledge our own sins and failings. We ought to be humble; we ought to be ashamed that we have made no better progress: that we often prefer darkness to light: that we are feeble instead of strong for Christ. Has not our Blessed Saviour come down for us since Old Testament days? What is our position to-day? What are we doing on earth for Christ?

Just let us imagine Abraham and Moses and David looking down from Heaven on us to-day. Have not *they* reason to censure us, to wonder at our failure to use our far greater privileges and means of grace? Have they not reason to find fault with our sloth, with our persistence in evil, with our poor and feeble results? Surely to our shame we must acknowledge that we are not less stiff-necked than were the Israelites of old.

The very psalms we read most eagerly and learn and love to-day bear the name of David. Out of the fulness of his heart, the Psalmist poured out all he felt towards his Creator. As a shepherd-boy, he probably acquired the experience embodied in Psalm xxiii.: 'The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. . . . Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.'

King David was able to put himself perfectly into the whole situation, having lived through it all. Again he sings: 'When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet:

all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field. . . . Oh, Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth' (Psalm viii. 3).

One wonders whether one may accept the origin of Psalm xxxiv., 'when he feigned madness before Abimelech' (? Achish) (verse 11): 'Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord. What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it. The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.'

We all love the Book of Psalms in our Bible, and when we have time we ought to learn our own special favourites off by heart. Then when you go and sit with that dear old woman over the hill, in that pretty clean cottage of hers, and read to her, you will see how she too appreciates the psalms. Her wrinkles become smooth; her face lights up with a smile; and she confides to you that you have chosen her very favourite one. It is lovely to have some one to share things with. That makes all the difference in one's life. That dear old woman, sitting in her high-backed armchair at her fireside with her white cap on, and three-cornered shawl, handed down to her from her grandmother, has seen a long life passing by. She has had sorrow, and has become acquainted with joy. She has lots to tell you about. Her husband was a sailor in the long ago: and she gave him God-speed on many an occasion, and God protected him for her to give him many a welcome back home.

On one memorable occasion God thought fit to welcome the sailor home above unto Himself: for he had been faithful and he deserved his rest. It was a winter's night. Cold and strong blew the wind: high and wild tossed and foamed the sea waves. Her anxious heart grieved for her man, to God she turned, she prayed and read and learned how God is strong to save: how He can calm the storm not only of His natural world, but of a human heart. Ever since that night she is a saddened woman; but peace has come to her. She can in confidence lift up her eyes and look out to the calm sea and deep blue sky; both lie smiling before her. She is waiting just a little while longer, and knows there is beyond for her God's own glorious Haven where her dear one is expecting her, and where there will be a meeting to part no more. Together you and she will be singing hymns; she, with her shaky and trembling voice; you, with the freshness and sweetness of youth. Your endeavours to bring cheer and comfort to this old friend of yours will reach the throne of God on high and will be acceptable to Him.

CHAPTER IX.

I. KINGS (SOLOMON—DIVISION OF THE KINGDOM—ELIJAH—AHAB).

WE now begin the first of the two Books of Kings. These relate the history of the kings of Israel, from the accession of Solomon to the Babylonian captivity. We read about the united kingdom under Solomon; then later on how it was divided, and fell into two parts; then how the kingdom of Judah alone remained, the kingdom of Israel being entirely swept away.

I Kings i. verse 1 begins thus: 'Now king David was old and stricken in years.' Before his death he appointed the best of the sons who had been spared to him. His name was Solomon, and he became perhaps the most powerful of the kings of Israel. David sent his own mule to fetch Solomon and bring him to him down to Gihon. The priest Zadok and the prophet Nathan were appointed to anoint him king of Israel and ruler of Judah. David ordered a trumpet to be blown, and commanded the people to shout for joy. 'And the people said, God save king Solomon. And all the people came up after him, and the people piped with pipes, and rejoiced with great joy, so that the earth rent with the sound of them' (verses 39, 40).

When messengers came to him to congratulate him on his son's accession, King David bowed himself upon the bed. 'Now the days of David drew nigh that he should die,' and he charged Solomon his son, saying (I Kings ii. 2): 'I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and show thyself a man; and keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways.' Few and plain words, such as any father might say to any son. But the whole world's wisdom is contained in these simple words: To be strong for good; to be a man in the true sense; to be truthful, courageous, just, and God-fearing. Solomon was to walk in God's ways. He was to keep the Lord's commandments and His judgments and His testimonies, according to the law of Moses. Doing all this, Solomon would be blessed and prosperous. Provided that Solomon and all Israel walked in truth, and with all their hearts before God, all would be well. Such were David's dying words to his son. Then, after leaving some ugly legacies of personal vengeance to his son, which show us how far the religion of that day was from Christ, he was laid to rest in the city of David.

David's reign was ever afterwards looked upon by the nation as the golden age of Israel, and the promise of a still more golden future. What were David's achievements? First, his achievements as a soldier and statesman.

In the period before his fall, which was the most successful period of his reign, he carried his conquests into Asia as far as the banks of the Euphrates. He organized a mighty army; the host which was commanded by Joab, the captain of the host; and there were besides a bodyguard of picked mercenaries, at one time at least largely composed of Philistines, headed by Ittai, the Gittite, of whom we have already read.

David had more than the power of Napoleon for inspiring personal devotion, as was shown in the way his mercenaries kept true to him in Absalom's rebellion in the darkest period of reverse, and in such episodes as the way his mighty men risked their lives against the Philistines to give him a moment's pleasure when they fetched the water to him in the cave of Adullam from the well of Bethlehem by the Gate.

But David gave to the nation not only a mighty empire won by the sword. In a very true sense it may be said he made the tribes into a nation, or at least completed the process begun by his master in statecraft, Samuel. The monarchy he established was not an Eastern despotism. The king's power was limited by the power of God. David felt himself to be God's representative. This kind of monarchy was what Samuel had worked for, for Saul was rejected for acting independently without regard for God. David was not always successful in keeping to his high ideal, but he aimed at it continually in spite of failures and falls. This high aim was what made him long remembered as Israel's greatest king, greatest certainly from a religious point of view.

The many misfortunes which followed David's fall, and made the latter part of his reign a period of so much depression, culminate in the narrative of the last chapter (2 Samuel xxiv.). David was moved by pride and ambition, in spite of the remonstrance of Joab, to number Israel from Dan to Beersheba at this time. This was done in the pride of David's heart, and on that account was not acceptable to the Lord. His anger was kindled against Israel. David had lent himself to wrong-doing; and his heart smote him. He acknowledged his sin. A prophet called Gad came before David, and told him that God had ordained that he should be punished for his wrongdoing. The Lord gave him a choice of three punishments. Either a seven months' famine was to waste the land; or David was to flee three months before his enemies; or a three

days' pestilence was to be sent. Preferring to fall into the hands of the Lord rather than of man, the pestilence, the sword of the Lord, was David's choice.

2 Samuel xxiv. verse 15: 'So the Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning even to the time appointed: and there died of the people from Dan to Beersheba seventy thousand men. And when the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, the Lord repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed the people, It is enough; stay now thine hand. And the angel of the Lord was by the threshing place of Araunah the Jebusite. . . . And God came that day to David, and said unto him, Go up, rear an altar unto the Lord in the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.'

David and Araunah had a talk together about the buying of this threshing floor. Araunah wanted to make David a present of it, but this the latter would not consent to. He said, 'Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price; neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing' (2 Samuel xxiv. 24). So he bought it for fifty shekels of silver, and Araunah gave him oxen for burnt sacrifices and threshing instruments for firing. This identical threshing floor can be seen, it is said, at the present day. It forms the centre of the interior of the exquisite Mosque of Omar in the middle of the Temple area in Jerusalem. The natural rock of the primitive threshing floor is there, with a gallery to walk in all round the rock. A Turkish Sultan built this mosque over two hundred years ago, in order to preserve this historical site. To this same threshing floor tradition tells us that Abraham brought his son for sacrifice. On this same rock Solomon's temple stood. On this same rock Herod built his temple. Wonderful exceedingly is the place with its unique wealth of sacred associations.

1 Kings chapter iii.: 'And Solomon made affinity with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and took Pharaoh's daughter, and brought her into the city of David, until he had made an end of building his own house, and the house of the Lord, and the wall of Jerusalem round about.'

As yet there was no house built on purpose for worship. The people sacrificed and burnt incense in high places, as being nearer Heaven. Solomon loved the Lord and walked in the statutes of David; and one day he went up to Gibeon to sacrifice, and at Gibeon the Lord appeared to him in a dream by night, and said, 'Ask what I shall give thee' (1 Kings iii. 5). Solomon said the Lord had showed his father David great mercy in every way, and that now

he had come to be king he wished to do his duty. 1 Kings iii. 7-9: Solomon said, 'I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or to come in. And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen; a great people that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?'

Was not this the very best possible thing King Solomon could have asked for? He felt that he had so much to learn: he could only accomplish his task by being given God's help. He desired most ardently to become good and wise for a good purpose and to do good. He prayed hard to the Lord to grant to him all the necessary precious gifts. Can we say that we too last night prayed to God to make us good and wise? I wonder what it is that we most desire God's help in? Solomon was a great and mighty king. We are nothing of the kind, but to all of us the Lord has given a heart and soul. God starts us fair on our life's race: it is for us to look to our opportunities, and not to lose them. But never must it be supposed that it is our strength which will carry us through: it is God's power which enables us to reach our goal, provided we commit our ways to Him.

As regards Solomon's request the Bible says (1 Kings iii. verse 10): 'The speech pleased the Lord. . . . And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment; behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honour: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days. And if thou wilt walk in my ways to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days. And Solomon awoke; and, behold, it was a dream.'

Thus Solomon found favour in the eyes of the Lord. But Solomon was human; and by his marriage with Pharaoh's daughter he had already begun his transgressions. This means he was tempted and fell grievously. With all his splendour he was weak in the pride of the flesh. Solomon had to be taught the lesson of humility. That was what he lacked. This weakness was at the root of his character, and proved to be his great failing. His success became too much for him, and he lost self-control and

moderation. Here is a lesson for us to learn. Does not this case of Solomon point to the fact that a privilege and a distinction can easily be turned into a curse; can easily bring us a great amount of trouble unless properly guarded and kept in its own place? Everything in our lives has to be kept within bounds; has to serve us and not become our master. Things must not be allowed to get into the saddle and ride mankind. Solomon became spoilt: his wealth, his wisdom, his position, all combined to turn his head. As life went on he allowed himself to be luxurious: his acts were tainted: misery then came to himself as well as to his family.

In the early part of his career he had an opportunity given him of displaying his wisdom in a very remarkable way. We will see now what this was. Look at our picture. Two women had come to King Solomon. Each of them had had a baby; one baby was living and was brought before the king, and one was dead. Both women claimed the living child. They had come before the king for judgment, and he was to settle which was the real mother. One woman of course was speaking the truth, the other a falsehood. How was King Solomon going to find out the truth, and restore the live baby to the rightful mother? There in our picture he sits on his throne! And he bethinks himself. After a while he speaks. He orders a sword to be brought; he commands one of his men to cut the live baby in two, and give each woman a half. Look at the man holding up the poor child. We shudder to think what is going to happen. Then one of the two women implores the king to spare the life of the child; rather than have it cut in two she prefers giving it up to the other woman. The other woman, on the contrary, says, 'Let it be neither mine nor thine, but divide it.' Here was the wished-for revelation. Solomon had brought it to pass in this way. By the real mother's unselfish love of her child, contrasted with the callousness of the other woman, everybody was convinced which was the true mother. No time was lost in giving her back her own child. In consequence of this judgment Solomon's fame spread through all the land.

All Israel saw that it was the Lord who was working in King Solomon for their good. Solomon appointed officers all over the country to administer justice, and the people were contented and prosperous. King Hiram of Tyre sent servants to Solomon when he heard that they had anointed him king instead of David. Solomon drew King Hiram's attention to the fact that on account of his many wars David, his father, had had no time to build a house unto the name of the Lord his God. Solomon said that as he

was enjoying rest on every side he proposed to build a house for the Lord. He asked King Hiram to hew him cedar trees out of Lebanon; he said their servants should work together. Hiram was delighted to comply with Solomon's request: he promised that his Sidonian servants should bring down timber of cedar and timber of fir from Lebanon unto the sea; he would order it to be conveyed by sea to whatever place Solomon might appoint, and Hiram would cause it to be discharged there. This place is now known as Jaffa. In return Solomon gave Hiram twenty thousand measures of wheat for food for his household, and twenty measures of pure oil year by year.

There was peace between these two monarchs, and they made a league together. Solomon sent a levy of thirty thousand men to Lebanon to work there. He began to use forced labour—a fatal course—very likely suggested by Pharaoh's daughter, who was accustomed to it in Egypt. Threescore and ten thousand that bore burdens, and fourscore thousand hewers worked in the mountains. And there were officers over the work to rule over the people who wrought. Then the king commanded them to bring great stones, and costly stones, and hewed stones, to lay the foundation of the house. And all this came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, and in the fourth year of King Solomon's reign over Israel.

This temple was to be most costly and most beautiful. It was to be similar to but double the length and breadth of the Tabernacle. To realise its glory we must turn to the sixth and seventh chapters of the First Book of Kings. After seven years it was completed, and then Solomon built himself a beautiful house, and that is all described in chapter seven.

1 Kings viii. verse 1: 'Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel, and all the heads of the tribes, the chief of the fathers of the children of Israel unto king Solomon in Jerusalem, that they might bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of the city of David, which is Zion And the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the Lord unto his place into the oracle of the house to the most holy place, even under the wings of the cherubims. . . . There was nothing in the ark save the two tables, of stone which Moses put there at Horeb, when the Lord made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt. And it came to pass when the priests were come out of the holy place that the cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because

of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord.'

This was God's sign of His approval of what had been done. All the Israelites who gathered in the Temple that day were once more reminded of and impressed with the fact of God's Presence with them and amongst them. God, we see, is a living force. He wishes to impress us. He imparts Himself to each one of us, if only we keep our ears and eyes open, and our conscience clear. His face shines upon us and we are warmed with His love. But we can only feel this so long as we keep our hearts open to God and do not, as it were, shut ourselves up in a darkened room with all the blinds down and the curtains drawn. In all creation there is not one man, woman, or child who has not God at his side, if only he stands at attention and is ready for God to speak to him and to direct him. God's Presence must not be looked upon as an exceptional thing, but we must watch and pray continually. We must be ever on the look-out, ever keen, ever on duty, like trustworthy soldiers, and we must be ready for God's call. All the Israelites knew that the Lord was with them. Next time when we go to church, let us think of Solomon's temple, and let us pray that God, in His mercy, may deign to be with us. We are meant to pray at home naturally, not merely in temple, church, or chapel. We are to pray anywhere and everywhere, for, as our hymn tells us, 'Prayer is the heart's sincere desire, uttered or unexpressed.'

In our own little room, in our family circle, God hears us as well as out in the open. He hears us on the land and on the sea. Our prayers reach Him on a mountain-top, in a desert, no matter where we may be. That is the beauty of God's bounty to us. And more marvellous still, God is never too much occupied, never too great to pay attention to so small a being as you or me. He is always accessible. He never fails us. We find the Lord everywhere. Surely this is most wonderful. A church or temple built to His honour and glory is God's house on earth. Solomon was content that he had succeeded in building a most beautiful place of worship. At the same time he was wise enough to know that the most beautiful place on earth built by man's hand can never be good enough for God, or worthy of His majesty and might.

Solomon exclaims (1 Kings viii. 27): 'But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded.' Solomon asked the Lord's blessing, and he asked him to make him and his Israelites worthy of the great favour that they were all receiving at God's hands. 1 Kings viii. 29: 'That thine eyes

may be opened toward this house night and day, even toward the place of which Thou hast said, My name shall be there.'

Let us fall down as the knight in our picture is doing, and let us also pray to our Heavenly Father. Solomon, the great king, was on his knees before the Mighty King of Heaven, praying with all his heart. He rose to his feet and blessed the people, and he and the children of the covenant offered up a sacrifice to God Almighty.

And God appeared to Solomon a second time at Gibeon, and He told him that his prayer was heard. Solomon, on the whole, had reigned well so far, although there were already signs of the falling away which followed. He built a navy for the Israelites, and he sent his ships trading on the Red Sea and the Mediterranean, and they came back laden with gold from Ophir, which was probably in East Africa, gold which may have been brought from the ancient workings of surface mines which exist to-day in Rhodesia. Solomon built many cities, amongst others Gezer and Beth-horon, and Baalath and Tadmor in the wilderness. This latter place, we believe, is the Baalbec of to-day, near Damascus.

There lived in those days a woman of great renown, the Queen of Sheba, an ancient kingdom in South Arabia. She had heard of the fame of Solomon. The Bible says she wished to prove him with hard questions. She wished to see for herself if the report of his wisdom, his goodness, and his wealth were true. She wanted to make his acquaintance, so she journeyed to Jerusalem with a great train; with camels laden with spices, and much gold and precious stones, all of which she presented to King Solomon. When she saw the house he had built, 'and the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cupbearers, and his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the Lord, there was no more spirit in her. And she said to the king, It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom. Howbeit I believed not the words until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and behold, the half was not told me . . . Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom. Blessed be the Lord thy God which delighteth in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the Lord loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king to do judgment and justice' (1 Kings x. verses 5-9).

For a picture representing Solomon and the Queen of Sheba we must turn to another panel of that glorious bronze door by Ghisberti, of which a reproduction appears opposite. We see her there

clasping Solomon's hand as a mark of friendship and esteem. We have already been told (1 Kings x. verse 2) that 'she communed with him of all that was in her heart. And Solomon told her all her questions: there was not anything hid from the king which he told her not.' We see this king and queen holding converse together: behind them stands the throne of ivory, overlaid with the finest gold. The throne had six steps, and the top of the throne was round behind, and two lions stood on either side, and twelve lions stood there on the one side and on the other upon the six steps.

King Solomon was endowed with some of the literary talent of King David, his father. King David's special book in the Bible is called the Book of Psalms; King Solomon's two books, the Book of Proverbs and the Song of Songs. In the case of both royal poets, it is not intended to assert that they are authors of the whole books. The books are merely associated with their names, as reputed authors of portions of them. King David's authorship of a portion of the Psalms is, of course, far more probable than King Solomon's of the books connected with his name.

You of my readers who are children must learn in childhood to concentrate your minds on your Bibles, and you must sit down when you can far away from where there are people talking, and you must read the Psalms and the Proverbs. You will soon find out those parts which you like best. Then on a Sunday, when you go to church, you must pay particular attention, and listen well, and you are sure to come across your favourite passages. Then you can join in the service with a will, and time will fly.

Now we have thus far learned something about the three first kings of Israel, about Saul, and the two greater kings who followed, David and Solomon. We must look them all up in our Bible and read about them there, because there is so much we have not time to examine into together here.

In this chapter we have heard much about King Solomon's riches. In our own lives, too, money is often discussed. People say how agreeable it is to have much of it. Many there are who live to a great extent just to get money. If we devote a few minutes to the subject, there may be some readers inclined to think that this is a digression from our Bible reading, but I hope that we shall be convinced before long that our every-day life is the very field for the practical work of the Bible. It is of no use whatever our reading the Bible as though it were merely interesting and not an authoritative guide to life.

The Bible has been given to us, that each of us, separately and individually, may learn our own lesson for our daily good: and

there is not a single person who can afford to dispense with the guidance for every-day life, which can be obtained from the study of Holy Scripture. The Bible is a book of gradual discovery, and of gradual revelation. It is meant for us all, whatever our capacities and whatever our position in life. We, all of us together, are God's large family of children, old and young, rich and poor, healthy and sick, happy and miserable, all of us in this big world of ours are meant to go and read our Bible daily, and drink living waters from God's own source. We shall never be disappointed if we make this our practice. In this Book of books, we find things revealed, as if written just for you and just for me. All is true, all is real, and there is something for every case.

Let us look for a moment at the difference that we see when we compare other books with our Bible. There are some books that tell us about plants, some about animals, some about curing the sick; there are others that teach us most useful knowledge, how best to understand and employ our native language; others about kings and queens and lawgivers. There are books that tell us about distant lands and foreign peoples. Why we could go on for ever, summing up the many, many books which have been written; all very useful and edifying no doubt, in their different ways. But see how great are their limitations, how little they can tell of the way of life. Many books there are, alas! not worth the trouble, or the time, which the poor housemaid has to spend in dusting them. Many books become old-fashioned and out of date, and are of no use. New discoveries make them valueless.

Now let us turn to our Bible. This Book remains of value through all ages, it is always new in spite of its antiquity. It is always of use, of the very greatest possible use: indeed, we can never afford to be, or to go, anywhere, without our Bible. If we travel, let our first thought be like General Gordon's, to pack up our Bible in our bag. Having once known the companionship and the comfort of our Bible, of God's own inspired and precious Book, we can never dream of facing life without it.

I want here to tell you about a Welsh girl. She had been taught out of God's Book, but she was too poor to possess a Bible of her own, and, in order to hear it read to her, she had to walk many miles across her native hills. One winter the snow was so deep and the weather so severe, that this dear child could not face the snowdrifts: she had to remain at home, and stay away and go without her Bible. A kind creature heard of her disappointment and helped her. All this happened years ago. Bibles were much more expensive than they are now, and this child's

yearning for the Word of God was the means of drawing grown-up people's attention to the need of reducing the Bible in price.

Out of this came the formation of the Bible Society. We see hereby how God puts power into the hands of a simple young girl. It is not by any means always the grown-up people who are of the most importance in this life, or who alone bring about things for good. Now, are you not quite pleased to know this? Old people may be sometimes taught a great deal by a little child. Do you think that this is very strange?

General Gordon loved children, especially boys, and spent much of his time amongst them. He and his boys, whom he had rescued from the life of the streets, influenced one another for good. He was at once a father and an elder brother to them. They adored him. He taught them all about the Bible; and they must have had lovely talks together. When he was in the greatest peril, left alone among savage people who knew no better, it was to the Bible that he turned for guidance, comfort, and support. Brave soldier that he was, it was from the Bible he got his strength. Let us follow his example.

All through life's journey we need our Bible; alike when we are successful or unfortunate, and when inward storms assail us. Do let us begin while we are quite young to appreciate our Bible reading. What in your father's house, in the days of your childhood, may be but a habit to start with, is sure to become, as years roll on, second nature, a necessity of your life. You will be guided aright, through manhood and through womanhood. His 'little ones' were and are loved by the Lord Jesus. Let God through His Only Son speak to you tenderly, and you will be comforted.

We said just now that we would speak about wealth and find out what that was. Well, it is a very agreeable thing to have money, and a good thing, provided that we use it aright. God gives to some people wealth, to others poverty. A golden rule for a rich person is that he should not be selfish. A rich person is never intended to spend his money wholly on himself. He has to realise how gracious the Lord has been to him to let him be rich. It is expected from such a person that he will do his duty, that he will think of those people around him who are without money. A rich man or child has to say, 'I must give money to poor children so that they may not starve,' as it was in the time of the famine which we read about in former chapters. We are not to spend all the money which we happen to possess in any one year. While good fat years of plenty are upon us, we must save up and have some to spare, as Joseph had in Egypt in the days of old.

Above all, no opportunity must be lost of dwelling on the example of the Lord Jesus, who taught us in so wonderful a way the lesson of humility, and of a simple life. Does not the Saviour say of Himself: 'Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head' (Matthew viii. verse 20). If we looked to Him before we set about ordering our lives, how much better it would be. His life, the highest life ever lived, was lived in perfect independence of external conditions, without property and without luxury—two things which most men spend their lives to gain, as well as without asceticism. We must share our money with those who need it, as we have opportunity.

The First Book of Kings, like all the books of the Bible, is a truthful book. Though written by Israelites, it tells the truth about the drawbacks to the prosperity of the Israelites, and to the greatness of King Solomon. It tells us that, in spite of all his blessings and privileges, he became an idolater: 'For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites' (1 Kings xi. verse 5); and 'then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon' (1 Kings xi. verse 7). This was the result of the king's polygamy. He married many wives of different nations, and to please his wives he joined in the immoral worship of their evil gods, such as those that have just been enumerated.

Thus Solomon unconsciously made provision for the decay of his kingdom when he introduced and patronised the idolatries of neighbouring nations, and so undermined the nation's strongest bulwark, the faith in the God of Abraham, the old loyal faith in pure spiritual religion, which, as the word 'religion' signifies, is the power that binds together or unites a nation, just as irreligion means the unbinding and disuniting power that makes a nation fall asunder. Solomon's reign ends with an ominous forecast of the approaching breaking up of his kingdom. Solomon reigned over Israel forty years. 1 Kings xi. verse 43: 'And Solomon slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David his father: and Rehoboam his son reigned in his stead.'

Rehoboam went to Shechem, and there all Israel made him king. Jeroboam and all the congregation came to Rehoboam, and told him that his father had made their yoke grievous, and asked him to lighten their yoke. He asked for three days to think it over, and consulted first the old men who had stood before Solo-

mon, and they advised him to speak good words to the malcontents, and that then they would be his servants for ever. But he forsook the counsel of the old men, and consulted with the young men instead. By the young men's advice he declared that, whereas his father had made their yoke heavy, he would add to it. His father had chastised them with whips, but he would chastise them with scorpions. The ten tribes were thoroughly discontented, and said: 'To your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David' (1 Kings xii. verse 16). Judah and Benjamin alone remained faithful to Rehoboam.

Thus Solomon's empire broke up. The Lord forbade civil war between the two parties. Rehoboam had prepared a great army to conquer the ten tribes and regain his kingdom, but, warned by the word of Shemaiah, the man of God, he gave up his enterprise. Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, was made the first king of Israel, *i.e.*, of the northern kingdom; he had been given the ten tribes by God by the mouth of His prophet Ahijah the Shilonite. But he did not remain loyal to God. He did not shape his life according to the commandments or the will of Jehovah, the Lord of Israel. He trusted in himself. For reasons of policy he introduced calf-worship, setting up one golden calf in Bethel and one in Dan. His reasons were that he feared that if the people went up to the temple at Jerusalem, they would fall under the influence of Rehoboam. Also he made a house of high places, and he made priests of the lowest of the people. He set up an altar and ordained a feast as at Jerusalem. When he was burning incense on his altar at Bethel, a man of God came and prophesied the coming of a great religious reformation in the future. As a sign, Jeroboam's hand, which he stretched from the altar to seize the man of God, was withered in a moment.

Rehoboam died and was buried with his father, Solomon, and his grandfather, David, in the city of David. We need not give the names of the less important kings who succeeded Jeroboam in Israel or Rehoboam in Judah. We may begin again with the really important King Omri, captain of the host, who was chosen King of Israel by the army in the camp. Omri made Israel a great military power, after he had overthrown the usurper Zimri. He formed a close alliance with Tyre and Sidon, and his son Ahab married Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians. Though a conqueror of the neighbouring nations and a power in Palestine, 'Omri wrought evil in the eyes of the Lord, and did worse than all that were before him' (1 Kings xvi. verse 25). He removed the capital to Samaria, ruins of which town exist to

the present day. His son Ahab, who succeeded him, was even worse than his father, owing to the influence of his masterful wife Jezebel, who brought about the introduction of Baal-worship—the worship in which she had been brought up—into Israel.

Ahab's reign was remarkable for the career of one of the greatest of prophets, Elijah, a man of Gilead. Elijah appears on the scene as from the first a bold opponent of Ahab and Jezebel, relying on his position as the instrument of God. The note of authority rings out in his utterance at his first recorded interview with Ahab. 'As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word' (1 Kings xvii. verse 1). The Lord saw fit in this way to punish the land, in consequence of the spread of idolatry. It required uncommon courage on the part of a man to speak out fearlessly to so wicked and absolute a king. It was not vanity nor was it arrogance which made Elijah speak thus. In his trust in God, that trust which only comes from long experience, is to be found the reason for Elijah's courage and strength.

And now we will give the first stories of God's wonderful workings for Elijah. 1 Kings xvii. verse 2: 'And the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning and evening. . . . And it came to pass after a while that the brook dried up because there had been no rain in the land. And the word of the Lord came to him, saying, Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee. So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was there gathering of sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel that I may drink. And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thy hand. And she said, As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks that I may go and dress it for me and my son that we may eat it, and die. And Elijah said unto her, Fear not: go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son. For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until

that day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth. And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house did eat many days. . . . And it came to pass after these things, that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick; and his sickness was so sore that there was no breath left in him. And she said unto Elijah, What have I done with thee, O thou man of God? Art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son? And he said unto her, Give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into a loft where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed. And he cried unto the Lord, and said, O Lord my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son? And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the Lord, and said, O Lord my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again. And the Lord heard the voice of Elijah: and the soul of the child came unto him again, and he revived. And Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother: and Elijah said, See, thy son liveth. And the woman said to Elijah, Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth.'

There are certain things which we must admit to be what is called supernatural. This means somehow beyond our ordinary human experience, things that we, while here on earth, cannot give the reason for, because our minds cannot fully comprehend God's workings. God is infinite, whereas our minds are finite. Let us remember the creation of the world by God is the great foundation miracle, and this, we have already pointed out, is the fact which stares us in the face, the explanation of which the wisest men can only guess at, a fact which prepares us to find the world full of miracle.

Some quite familiar things, such as how our souls exist in our bodies, we cannot even attempt to explain. Let us realise that God has given us our life, itself a great mystery, whether in the animal or in the vegetable world. Not to speak of that mystery of mysteries, the life of the Spirit, the life of the body itself is a wonderful thing. A flower is a mystery, says the poet:

'Little flower—but *if* I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is.'

How can we ever doubt God's power or say that anything is im-

possible to God? Doubt is a very severe illness, which unfortunately attacks many people, to their own loss and misery. There is only one cure, and this precious medicine is called Faith. Oh, that those who are thus stricken would only reach out their hands to receive a balm for their wounds, and a cheer for their souls. Without faith they must spiritually starve to death.

Realising therefore, as we do, that God is All-powerful, it is not surprising to us to see how His Spirit worked in Elijah, and how God used the prophet to bring back to life the widow's son. To us it is all quite plain. Elijah was a deeply religious man. He knew it was God's doing. He did not take any credit to himself.

Elijah some time after was directed to go and again interview the wicked king Ahab. The prophet told the king that the Lord would send rain upon the earth: for the long drought had caused a sore famine in Samaria. When the prophet approached the king, the latter said unto him: 'Art thou he that troubleth Israel?' (1 Kings xviii. verse 17). We see that Ahab wanted to blame the prophet for the drought in the country. Elijah answered Ahab, 1 Kings xviii. verse 18: 'I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim. Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel, unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table. So Ahab sent . . . and gathered the prophets together. . . . And Elijah came unto all the people and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word. Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, remain a prophet of the Lord; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men.'

Elijah now directs the prophets of Baal to take a bullock and prepare it for sacrifice, and make ready. He says that he also will prepare another bullock himself. He tells the prophets of Baal to call on their gods: Elijah would call on his God, and 'the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken' (1 Kings xviii. verse 24). Verse 26: They (the prophets of Baal) 'called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon (about, R.V.) the altar which was made. And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing (gone aside, R.V.), or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.

And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them. And it came to pass when midday was past, and they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that there was neither voice nor any to answer, nor any that regarded. And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. . . . And he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down. And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the Lord came, saying, Israel shall be thy name: and with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord: and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed. And he put wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid him on the wood, and said, Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood. And he said, Do it the second time. And they did it the second time. And he said, Do it the third time. And they did it the third time. And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water. And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again. Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God.'

After this miracle Elijah directed the children of Israel to take the prophets of Baal, and not let one escape. They took them and brought them to Elijah, and he slew them down by the brook Kishon. An awful punishment was this to inflict! We feel, from our modern standpoint, much inclined to find fault with Elijah for such bloodshed; but it is not for us to pronounce judgment. The Bible is a book for our instruction. This passage must not be regarded as a mere brutality. Everything that happens in Holy Scripture has, if we seek for it, some explanation. The key to the Old Testament is to realise that Revelation is progressive. Men in those days were able to understand far less of the Will of God than men at a later period.

We must also remember in this connection that Baal-worship spelt national immorality, and national immorality by God's inexorable

law spells national destruction. It was to save the whole nation from falling to pieces that Elijah slew the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal. If we would put to death the man or men who poisoned our water supply deliberately, or even the man who killed an individual, there was some reason for Elijah to think that it was God's Will that he should slay the slayers of the souls of a whole nation. Contrast the severity of Elijah with the growing sweetness of Elisha, and especially with the anticipation of the rule of Christian love in Isaiah.

1 Kings xviii. verse 41: 'And Elijah said unto Ahab, Get thee up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of abundance of rain. . . . Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees, and said to his servant, Get up now, look toward the sea. And he went up, and looked, and said, There is nothing. And he said, Go again seven times. And it came to pass at the seventh time that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea like a man's hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down that the rain stop thee not. And it came to pass in the mean while, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel. And the hand of the Lord was upon Elijah; and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.'

Ahab told his wicked wife Jezebel all that had happened, and how the false prophets had been slain. She resented the slaughter of her four hundred and fifty prophets, and hated Elijah. She sent him a message that she would have him killed the next day.

1 Kings xix. verse 3: 'And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there. But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree; and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.'

We see Elijah, sad and forlorn, hunted for his life and completely wearied out, allowing himself to think that the Lord who can achieve everything was unmindful of His prophet, and was preparing for him nothing but failure. He thought there was little use in trying any more or in working so hard. We see here the weariness of even one of God's own chosen ones. It is for us to learn our lesson from this before passing on. We are meant never to despair, or to give in. It is for us to plod on, even when things

are darkest: we are meant to work patiently. God is on high to reward, but not until His own good time has come.

We now go back again to Elijah. 1 Kings xix. verse 5, continues: 'And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him and said unto him, Arise and eat. And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again. And the angel of the Lord came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee. And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God. And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah? And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword: and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away. And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood at the entering in of the cave. And behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah?'

Elijah had passed through his tribulation of weariness and doubt and of unfaith in the success of his appointed work. Oh! the comfort and joy of Elijah in the midst of his disappointment, and amid all the tumult of the forces of nature, as well as the tumult of his own heart, when he heard this still small voice which put him once more in communion with his God. Oh! the peace that came to him once more. Elijah knew again that this still small voice meant that the Lord was present with him.

This still small voice that had spoken not to the outward ear, but to the spirit's hearing in the depths of the soul, was the same voice that had spoken to Abraham and called him to leave his home beyond the Euphrates to found the nation of which Elijah was now the chief prophet. It was the same voice that had spoken to Moses on the same mountain, long centuries before, and had

called him to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt, and afterwards had given him again in the same mount the Ten Commandments. It is the same still small voice that has spoken to all men and women since, and guided safely all who listened to and obeyed it. It is the same still small voice that speaks to you and me now. The voice that spoke to Moses was the reason why Horeb was called the Mount of God, and probably the reason why Elijah went there in his hour of utmost need; and for the same reason, because the same voice speaks to us specially there, we call the church the House of God.

Well would it be if all of us would appreciate to the full God's gentleness, and God's tenderness, and God's goodness towards us. A still small voice it is, yet it is able to influence us wonderfully. This passage of the Bible is full of beauty, full of meaning; and let us never forget that it is a small hushed voice which can soothe, and comfort, and refresh all those who suffer in mind or in body. The fulness of God's time had come. Elijah had had two kinds of food. The angel had brought him food for his body, and God had supplied him with food for his soul. All of us live on both these kinds of food, in the same way as Elijah. Our inner self is far hungrier and needier than our outward. To sustain its life the body is satisfied with some milk, some bread, and some fruit. The plainer the food is with which we supply our body the better remains our health, and the better able are we to cope with all the demands made upon us. And now let me tell you of all the things our inner man has need of. He hungers after righteousness; he thirsts for living waters; he requires faith, pure thoughts, good actions; he hungers after truth, courage, patience, unselfishness; he thirsts for kindness of heart, charity—well, we have not half-finished summing up all his necessities yet; but we must return to our narrative, and so must pass on.

We have seen how God's prophet Elijah was allowed to suffer humiliation and bitterest disappointment, and utter failure, as it seemed to him, before his work for Israel's benefit was turned to good account. From Elijah we learn that it matters not whether our labour be seemingly in vain, or whether it be crowned with success which *we* can see. It is God's eye alone which sees everything. He knows if our work counts, and we are to be content to leave the issue in His hands. It is waste of time for us to trouble our heads as to results: it is our duty to be up and doing. God is on high to complete and to make perfect, if it be His Will. Elijah had worked as much as God had intended him to work. He had believed in and done his best for the Lord. Another man chosen

by God was already waiting to take up the task of reforming the life of the children of Israel. We still continue reading their history. They are still being taught, and great is the time and the patience their training continues to require, just like the patience of Him who is trying to teach us.

1 Kings xix. verse 15: 'And the Lord said unto him' (Elijah), Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria: and Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room.'

The Lord told Elijah that the Israelites would suffer severely at the hands of these men; for instance such as escaped from the sword of Hazael should be slain by that of Jehu. The Lord went on to say that there were left to Him still seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal, and whose mouth had not kissed him. Elijah departed according to God's word, and found Elisha, the son of Shaphat, ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth. Elijah passed him and cast his mantle upon him. Thus the old prophet called the young prophet, who rose to take his place. Elijah had another meeting with Ahab, and predicted the king's doom, because Ahab had worked evil in the sight of the Lord. He also foretold Jezebel's doom. The occasion for this prophecy of doom was supplied in the following way: Naboth, the Jezreelite, had a vineyard, hard by the palace of Ahab, and Ahab wanted to possess it. Naboth replied that he did not wish to part with the inheritance of his father. Jezebel heard this, and she said to King Ahab her husband, 'Dost thou not govern the kingdom of Israel? arise, and eat bread, and let thine heart be merry: I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite' (1 Kings xxi. verse 7).

So she plotted and brought to pass the stoning of Naboth, and told her husband to go down and take possession: and Ahab went. Who should meet him but Elijah, sent to meet him by the command of God. Ahab greeted Elijah thus: 'Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?' (1 Kings xxi. verse 20), Elijah replied: 'I have found thee: because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the Lord. Behold, I will bring evil upon thee . . . and will make thy house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat . . . for the provocation wherewith thou hast provoked me to anger, and made Israel to sin' (1 Kings xxi. verse 22). And of Jezebel also he said: 'The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the walls of Jezreel. Him that dieth of Ahab in the city the dogs shall eat;

and him that dieth in the field shall the fowls of the air eat' (1 Kings xxi. verses 23, 24).

King Ahab of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of Judah joined forces against the Syrians, but Ahab's hour had come. In the battle, although Jehoshaphat had stood by him and Ahab had disguised himself in order to escape the enemies' attention, the latter king had to die. 1 Kings xxii. verse 34: 'And a certain man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness: wherefore he said to the driver of his chariot, Turn thine hand, and carry me out of the host; for I am wounded. And the battle increased that day: and the king was stayed up in his chariot against the Syrians, and died at even: the blood ran out of the wound into the midst of the chariot. . . . So the king died, and was brought to Samaria, and they buried the king in Samaria. And one washed the chariot in the pool of Samaria; and the dogs licked up his blood; and they washed his armour; according unto the word of the Lord which he spake.'

CHAPTER X.

II. KINGS—I. AND II. CHRONICLES—EZRA—NEHEMIAH—ESTHER.

IN the Second Book of Kings we continue to read of the evil doings of Israel. They trusted in Baal and forgot their own true God. The more we read the Bible the more we are convinced of the long-suffering patience of our Heavenly Father.

We read in this book of these two prophets, Elijah and Elisha, going from Gilgal down to Bethel, then on to Jericho and down to the Jordan. 2 Kings ii. verse 8: 'And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground. And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me. And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so. And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces. He took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back, and stood by the bank of Jordan; and he took the mantle of Elijah and smote the waters, and said, Where is the Lord God of Elijah? and when he also had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither: and Elisha went over.'

This was taken by the people to indicate that Elisha too was inspired with the spirit of God, and they believed in him. And now we will look at our picture. It has pleased many and many a person who has not had the privilege of looking at its original, the panel of a most beautiful door of the Sabine Church in Rome. The panel is carved in a beautiful rich dark wood, mellowed by age, and we marvel as we gaze on it at the love and the patience the artist was able to put into his work. It is crude and early work, and

very quaint; but true artistic feeling pervades every line of it, and we love this dear old-fashioned carving.

About this time the Israelites were at war with the Moabites. Mesha, their king, had revolted against Ahab. A great number of stones and other monuments with inscriptions have been discovered which fully confirm the truth of the portions of the Bible which they illustrate. No other ancient book in the world has such a mass of independent corroboration. Such a remarkable confirmation we find in the Moabite Stone. It was erected in 850 B.C. by Mesha, king of Moab, to commemorate his victories over Israel. It was broken up by the Arabs, and a portion was found in 1868 in the ruins of Dibon. If you ever go to Paris go to the Louvre, to the Jewish Court, and there you will see the Moabite Stone. The inscription differs from the Hebrew of the Old Testament. It belongs to the primitive Hebrew writing in which probably many of the earlier books of the Old Testament were originally written. King Mesha tells us on the Moabite Stone that in the reign of Omri and his son Ahab, Israel oppressed and occupied Moab forty years. We read in the book before us (2 Kings iii. verse 4), that Mesha, king of Moab, 'rendered unto the king of Israel a hundred thousand lambs and a hundred thousand rams with the wool: but it came to pass when Ahab was dead, that the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel.'

This king of Israel was Jehoram, son of Ahab, and he invited Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, to assist him in an invasion of Moab. The two kings obtained the assistance of the king of Edom, and the three of them went to consult Elisha, and, acting on the prophet's advice, they completely out-manœuvred and defeated the Moabites, and blockaded the king of Moab in Kir-haraseth, and there the king of Moab offered his eldest son as a burnt offering on the wall to induce Chemosh, his god, to help him. This was followed by the retreat of the Israelites, probably owing to the strong superstition fostered by the idolatry introduced by Ahab, which made the Israelites regard the sacrifice of the king's son as an appeal to Chemosh that was certain to win that god's support. However the fact may be explained, this retreat from Moab was followed by a series of victories won by King Mesha, and recorded on the Moabite Stone.

Elisha performed many miracles. We read how he multiplied the poor widow's oil. Her husband had died, and she told the prophet that he knew her husband had been a true servant of the Lord. They were poor, and the creditor had come to take away her two sons to be bondmen. Naturally the poor widow was greatly

distressed; she said that all she possessed in her house was one pot of oil. Elisha told her to go and borrow vessels from all her neighbours, and when she had obtained them she was to shut the door upon herself and her sons, and she was to fill all the vessels full from the one pot of oil. The miraculous supply of oil proved inexhaustible. The man of God then told her to sell her oil and pay her debt, and with what remained she was to feed herself and her children. Elisha performed another miracle at a place called Shunem, where there was a great (*i.e.*, a wealthy) woman. She remarked to her husband that she had observed a man passing to and fro. She said (2 Kings iv. 9): 'Behold now, I perceive that this is an holy man of God, which passeth by us continually. Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall (*i.e.*, the front wall that supported the roof of the house); and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick: and it shall be when he cometh to us that he shall turn in thither.'

Elisha availed himself of this kind hospitality. One day, he said to his servant Gehazi, that he was to call this Shunammite, because he wanted to show himself grateful to her, and ask her if there was anything he could do for her. Gehazi told the prophet that she had no children, and that she would dearly like to have a son. Elisha called her and told her she should have her wish, and in due time a child was given to her.

2 Kings iv. verse 18: 'And when the child was grown, it fell on a day, that he went out to his father to the reapers. And he said unto his father, My head, my head. And he said to a lad, Carry him to his mother. . . . he sat on her knees till noon, and then died. And she went up, and laid him on the bed of the man of God, and shut the door upon him, and went out.'

In her agony she called her husband to send a young man with an ass, to go and fetch the man of God. An ass was saddled; she directed her servant to go forward and not to slack his riding: for to make sure she had decided to go herself. At mount Carmel, Elisha spied her from afar. When she came up, she caught the prophet by the feet. Gehazi came near to thrust her away. 'The man of God said, Let her alone; for her soul is vexed within her.'

She persuaded the prophet to come back with her. 2 Kings iv. verse 32: 'And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, and laid upon his bed. He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the Lord. And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and he stretched himself upon the child; and the flesh of the

child waxed warm. Then he returned, and walked in the house to and fro; and went up, and stretched himself upon him: and the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes. And he called Gehazi, and said, Call this Shunammite. So he called her. And when she was come in unto him, he said, Take up thy son. Then she went in, and fell at his feet, and bowed herself to the ground, and took up her son, and went out.'

There is a very charming story connected with an event in Elisha's life. I know, my young readers, you will love to hear about it. It is once more a most powerful example of the influence a boy or girl may possess and use for good. You must by no means wait to be useful until you are grown up, you must always be on the alert. You cannot afford to be dilatory. There is work for you to do for God and for your fellow-man, which is marked out by God for you and for no one else to accomplish. Your place is ready waiting for you, ready to be taken, to do some work for God at once. Well, the little maid the Bible tells us about here is not even known to us by name, but nobody ever forgets her, once they have read about her; and you and I will always think lovingly of her.

Naaman was captain of the host of the king of Syria, and he took captive many Israelites, men, and women, and children, amongst whom was our little maid. She must have been a very natty and useful little person, who could turn her hand to anything. Naaman was quick to observe this. She became his wife's maid-servant. He was very sick of leprosy. There was then, as there is now, no cure for this disease. His death was merely a matter of time. Our little maid declared that she knew and was certain of a remedy for this stricken master of hers. Now what had this clever little person thought of?

Our little maid, a mere child, had grasped the tremendous truth, the biggest thing even an older person can ever think about; that God is the ultimate source of all help, physical as well as spiritual. 2 Kings v. verse 3: 'She said unto her mistress, Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy. One went in and told his lord, saying, thus and thus said the maid that is of the land of Israel.'

As a little child this little maid had been taught about Jehovah, and had learnt to love and trust Him in everything. Absolute faith in Jehovah, the God of her fathers, was her remedy, and certainly it was the best in the world. Naaman accordingly went with his horses and his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha. The prophet sent his messenger to the sick man, and Naaman was told to go and wash in Jordan seven times, and that then his flesh

would come again to him and he should be clean. Naaman's pride revolted against the humbleness of the means the prophet had appointed for his cure, but ultimately, persuaded by his servants, he went and dipped in Jordan and was healed of his leprosy. This cleansed his poor diseased body; but this was not the only thing that occurred. We are certainly meant to keep our bodies clean, but still more our souls. An Italian proverb has it that a clean soul lives in a clean body. God wishes to cleanse everybody's soul with living waters.

2 Kings v. verse 15: Naaman said, 'Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel.' What a wonderful piece of work was this, and done by a very young child. A little girl anxious to do good to those who had done her harm. who had carried her off from her home and made her a slave. She illumines a page of the Bible, and light goes forth from her to all those who read about her.

We now read of Elisha's death. It was a time of continual war. The Lord, according to His promise given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, still helped the Israelites, in spite of their persistent and repeated misdeeds. In this Second Book of Kings we read of King Jehoram's general, Jehu, being anointed king at Ramoth-Gilead by Elisha's messenger. This was what the Lord had commanded Elijah on mount Horeb. 1 Kings xix. verse 16: 'Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel.' This order Elijah handed down to Elisha, whom he had called to be prophet in his room, according to the word of the Lord. Elisha sent one of the 'Sons of the Prophets' to carry out the duty of anointing Jehu. Jehu had no idea of the young man's errand, and, when he was anointed, came down and told the other captains of the host, and 'they hasted, and took every man his garment, and put it under him on the top of the stairs, and blew with trumpets, saying, Jehu is king' (2 Kings ix. verse 13). Jehu at once drove his chariot to Jezreel, and there was met by King Jehoram in the portion of Naboth the Jezreelite. Jehu killed the king.

2 Kings ix. verse 24: 'And Jehu drew a bow with his full strength, and smote Jehoram between his arms, and the arrow went out at his heart, and he sunk down in his chariot. Then said Jehu to Bidkar his captain, Take up, and cast him in the portion of the field of Naboth the Jezreelite: for remember how that, when I and thou rode together after Ahab his father, the Lord laid this burden upon him; surely I have seen yesterday the blood of Naboth, and the blood of his sons, saith the Lord; and I will requite thee in this plat, saith the Lord.'

Jehu, after killing Jehoram first, and then his friend King Ahaziah, drove to Jezreel, and as he entered in at the gate, Jezebel, who had painted her face and tired her head, looked out at a window and said (verse 31), 'Had Zimri peace who slew his master?' Jehu looked up, and told the servants of the palace if they were on his side to throw her down. 'So they threw her down: and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall, and on the horses: and he trode her under foot. And when he was come in, he did eat and drink, and said, Go, see now this cursed woman, and bury her: for she is a king's daughter. And they went to bury her: but they found no more of her than the skull, and the feet, and the palms of her hands' (2 Kings ix. verse 33). When they told Jehu, he remembered the word of the Lord spoken by Elijah: 'in the portion of Jezreel shall dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel.'

Jehu's vengeance on the family of the wicked Ahab did not cease here. He sent to the Elders of Samaria and ordered them, if they were on his side, to cut off the heads of the king's seventy sons, and the Elders did so, and sent the seventy heads in baskets to Jehu. Jehu excused this slaughter of Ahab's family and friends by the plea of his zeal for God's service, and he certainly put down Baal-worship by the effective measure of slaughtering the worshippers. The image of Baal and the house of Baal were broken down. 2 Kings x. verse 28: 'Thus Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel.' But in other respects we read: 'Jehu departed not from the sins of Jeroboam: to wit, the golden calves which were in Beth-el and in Dan' (that is to say, a corrupt worship of Jehovah under the form of a golden bull was carried on).

When Queen Athaliah, the daughter of Jezebel and Ahab, saw that her son, Ahaziah, was dead, she rose and destroyed all the seed royal. One child escaped her, Joash by name, who was hidden away for six years in the house of the Lord by Jehosheba, the daughter of King Joram, sister of Ahaziah. Meanwhile the usurping Queen Athaliah reigned. The boy Joash was crowned by Jehoiada, the priest; and Athaliah, who came in at this moment crying 'Treason!' was slain after she had been removed from the Lord's house.

Joash, under the guidance of Jehoiada, reigned well. The temple was repaired, though the high places were not taken away. Hard pressed by Hazael, king of Syria, Joash had to buy him off with the hallowed treasures of the House of the Lord. Meanwhile, in Israel, Jehoahaz, the son of Jehu, began to reign, and was succeeded by his son Joash, and he, in his turn, by his son, Jeroboam the Second. Jeroboam the Second proved to be the most powerful monarch who

had occupied the throne of the northern kingdom. He re-conquered the neighbouring tribes and nations, and his empire did not fall far short of the wide extent of David's. In his long reign there was great material prosperity as well as great military success; but with the prosperity came luxury, and with the luxury injustice and oppression of the poor by the rich. These were the outward manifestations of a deadly disease of godlessness, which devastated all grades of society. The nation was gradually breaking up in the decay of character which followed the decay of religion. This was the time when Amos prophesied at the great sanctuary at Bethel that the Lord would send 'not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord' (Amos viii. verse 11).

At Bethel Amos foretold the approaching captivity of the Israelites, and soon after this the king of Assyria captured Samaria and carried away ten tribes captive to Assyria, where they disappeared finally like raindrops in the sea. Hosea's prophecies were like those of Amos, directed against the prevalent godlessness and immorality in the northern kingdom. Unlike Elijah and Elisha, Amos and Hosea were prophets who committed their prophecies to writing. Meanwhile Judah had to struggle against two forces, one of which was Pekah, king of Israel, and the other Rezin, king of Damascus. These two kings invaded Judah in order to set up a puppet of theirs as king in Jerusalem in place of King Ahaz, probably to compel Ahaz to join their alliance against Assyria. Ahaz, in spite of the efforts of Isaiah, who was an influential statesman as well as a great prophet, entered into an alliance with the king of Assyria, supplanting him for his help against the allied kings Pekah and Rezin, and taking all the silver and gold he found in the House of the Lord and sending it as a present to the king of Assyria.

'And Ahaz slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David: and Hezekiah his son reigned in his stead' (2 Kings xvi. verse 20). This was more than seven hundred years before the birth of Christ. Hezekiah was a great and good king, and he 'did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that David his father did.' Not the least of the many things to his credit is the close friendship which existed between him and the prophet Isaiah. He was twenty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. 2 Kings xviii. verse 4: 'He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan' (*i.e.*, 'brazen

serpent' or 'a mere piece of brass'). 'He trusted in the Lord God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him. For he clave to the Lord, and departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which the Lord commanded Moses. And the Lord was with him; and he prospered whithersoever he went forth: and he rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not. He smote the Philistines, even unto Gaza, and the borders thereof, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city. And Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, came up against Samaria, and besieged it.'

Here it would be most interesting to read the entire chapters of 2 Chronicles xxix., xxx., and xxxi. In these chapters is described the cleansing of the Temple of God; how Hezekiah brought in the priests and the Levites to carry on in the best possible manner the solemn services in the House of the Lord. The reign of Hezekiah was the golden age of prophetic vision: the age of the greatest of all the prophets, Isaiah of Jerusalem. A large part of Isaiah's activity as a statesman consisted in the influence he tried to exercise against the party at Jerusalem who were eager for an alliance with Egypt against the Assyrians. At one time Isaiah was quite successful; but at last this Egyptian party among the nobility of Jerusalem overcame Hezekiah's reluctance, and he broke off friendly relations with the Assyrians by refusing to pay tribute. Then King Sennacherib of Assyria marched into the Holy Land with a great army, and defeated the Egyptian forces who came to the aid of Hezekiah.

One of Sennacherib's inscriptions says: 'As for Hezekiah of Judah, who has not submitted to my yoke, I besieged and took forty-six of his strong cities I took two hundred thousand and one hundred and fifty prisoners. . . . I shut up Hezekiah himself in his royal city, Jerusalem, like a bird in a cage.' Hezekiah sent to the king of Assyria to Lachish, where he lay with his army, and offered terms, and paid a huge tribute of gold and silver. Nevertheless, Sennacherib was not satisfied, but sent part of his army to Jerusalem under his officer. 2 Kings xviii. verse 17: 'And the king of Assyria sent Tartan, and Rabsaris, and Rabshakeh (titles of Assyrian officers) from Lachish to King Hezekiah, with a great host against Jerusalem and when they were come up, they stood by the conduit of the upper pool, which is in the highway of the fuller's field.'

This identical place and pool here described (taking it as that of Siloam) is to be seen at the present day. The Rab-shakeh blasphemed against the Lord, declaring scornfully the folly of trusting

in the Lord's protection. 2 Kings xviii. verse 24: 'How then wilt thou turn away the face of one captain of the least of my master's servants, and put thy trust on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen?' Then Hezekiah's representatives begged the Assyrian officer to speak in Syrian, and not to talk in the Jews' language (that is, in Hebrew), whereupon the Assyrian appealed directly to the people, who had assembled on the walls and urged them to surrender, promising them, on behalf of the king of Assyria, that if they came out and surrendered, he would take them away to a fertile land, where they would live in the utmost comfort and prosperity. This gross appeal to the common soldiers filled Hezekiah with dismay. He rent his clothes and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the Lord. He sent his servant Eliakim to the prophet Isaiah. He besought the Lord to have mercy on the children of Israel. He implored Isaiah to lift up his prayer 'for the remnant that are left.' Consolation was given to Hezekiah in a great prophecy from Isaiah. The king was comforted by the news that his mighty enemy, King Sennacherib, would go back to Assyria unsuccessful.

The prophet Isaiah assured King Hezekiah that the Lord had graciously taken compassion on them all. 2 Kings xix. verse 32: 'Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the Lord. For I will defend this city, to save it, for my own sake, and for my servant David's sake.'

The Lord promised that 'the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall yet again take root downward, and bear fruit upward. For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of mount Zion: the zeal of the Lord of hosts shall do this' (verses 30, 31).

2 Kings xix. verse 35: 'And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses.' After this the Assyrian army retreated from Jerusalem, and King Sennacherib himself left Lachish and returned to Assyria, where he was afterwards assassinated by his own sons, in the house of Nisroch his god. As to the way the Lord smote the Assyrian camp at Jerusalem, some incline to think it was plague, but its suddenness seems to point rather to a visitation of cholera.

We read now of a severe illness which assailed Hezekiah. The

king was 'sick unto death' (2 Kings xx. verse 1). The prophet Isaiah advised him to put his house in order because he was going to die. The poor sick man turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the Lord, and this is what he said (2 Kings xx. verse 3): 'I beseech thee, O Lord, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore.' He hoped that immediate relief would be given him. God's ways are not our ways. Hezekiah had first to be humbled and to be taught that God's blessing is not bestowed because we may happen to deserve it, as we are inclined to think. We are not to think that it is ours by right. No, indeed, God's blessing is upon us through grace.

Hezekiah had to be taught that what he had been the means of accomplishing was by no means through his own merit, but thanks rather to the Lord's power for good, working in him. When humility reigned in his soul, then, and not before, did the Lord deign to listen to his prayer, and grant the fulfilment of it. The word of the Lord came to the prophet Isaiah, and he was able to tell King Hezekiah that the Lord had seen his tears and heard his prayers, and would heal him, and would grant him a further lease of life of fifteen more years. In humbleness of heart, Hezekiah acknowledged his weakness. The Lord strengthened him and consoled him, and his recovery took place. A lump of figs, so the Bible tells us, was laid as a plaster on Hezekiah's boil, and thereupon his body was quickly restored to health. In the days of Hezekiah's personal affliction and recovery, Israel, that is Judah, regained some of its former prosperity.

At the end of Hezekiah's reign we read (2 Chronicles xxxii. verse 27): He 'had exceeding much riches and honour: and he made himself treasuries for silver, and for gold, and for precious stones, and for spices, and for shields, and for all manner of pleasant jewels; storehouses also for the increase of corn, and wine, and oil; and stalls for all manner of beasts, and cotes for flocks. Moreover he provided him cities, and possessions of flocks and herds in abundance: for God had given him substance very much. This same Hezekiah also stopped the upper watercourse of Gihon, and brought it straight down to the west side of the city of David. And Hezekiah prospered in all his works.'

Finally we read in 2 Chronicles xxxii. verse 33: 'Hezekiah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the chiefest of the sepulchres of the sons of David: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem did him honour at his death. And Manasseh his son reigned in his stead. Manasseh was twelve years old when he

began to reign, and he reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem.' Unhappily, he 'did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord.' 'He built again the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down, and he reared up altars for Baalim and made groves and worshipped all the host of heaven and served them. . . . Also he built altars in the house of the Lord' (2 Chronicles xxxiii. verse 2). And he made his children pass through the fire, and observed times and used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards, 'and wrought much evil in the sight of the Lord.' So 'Manasseh slept with his fathers, and they buried him in his own house: and Amon his son reigned in his stead' (2 Chronicles xxxiii. verse 20). Amon sinned like his father, had a short reign, and was killed by his own servants. Now we come to a boy-king, whose name was Josiah, Amon's son. He was only eight years old when he came to the throne. He reigned for thirty-one years. He walked in God's ways. Think of this good young king, and how blessed it is if the same can be said of us, namely, that we try to walk in God's ways. ¶We belong to Him just the same. We can also be a lovely example to those around us, as was King Josiah to the men of Judah.

Josiah, in the eighteenth year of his reign, repaired the Temple, appointing men who did the work faithfully. During the work Hilkiah, the high priest, found the Book of the Law in the House of the Lord (621 B.C.). This was carried to the king, and Shaphan, the scribe, read it to the king. The contents of this book point to its being the book of Deuteronomy.

Josiah at once recognised that the commandments and ordinances in this book had not been kept, and he rent his clothes. Then he commanded Hilkiah, the high priest, to go and inquire of the Lord. He went and inquired through Huldah, the prophetess, the wife of Shallum; 'now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college' (R.V. in the second quarter) (2 Chronicles xxxiv. verse 22). She told them that the Lord would bring evil on Jerusalem for their wrongdoings, but because Josiah had humbled himself it should not come in his day. Josiah sent and gathered all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem and all the people small and great (2 Kings xxiii. verse 2), 'and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the Lord, and the king stood by a pillar, and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, . . . and to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people stood to the covenant. And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, and the priests of the second order, . . . to bring forth out of

the temple of the Lord all the vessels that were made for Baal, and for the grove, and for all the host of heaven: and he burned them without Jerusalem'; and 'he brought out the grove from the house of the Lord, . . . and burned it at the brook Kidron, and stamped it small to powder, and cast the powder thereof upon the graves of the children of the people.' 2 Kings xxiii. verse 15: 'Moreover the altar that was at Beth-el, and the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, had made, both that altar and the high place he brake down, and burned the high place, and stamped it small to powder, and burned the grove.'

This putting down of the high places, reaching even to Bethel, which characterised Josiah's reformation, accords well with the fact that the reformation proceeded from the reading of the Book of the Law, which we have taken to be Deuteronomy, for this exclusive regard for a central sanctuary and objection to a local worship as at the high places is a central feature of that book. 2 Kings xxiii. verse 29 tells us: 'In his' (Josiah's) 'days Pharaoh-necho, king of Egypt, went up against the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates: and king Josiah went against him; and he slew him at Megiddo when he had seen him' (608 B.C.). 'And his servants carried him in a chariot dead from Megiddo, and brought him to Jerusalem, and buried him in his own sepulchre.' 2 Chronicles xxxv. verse 24: 'And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. And Jeremiah' (a prophet we shall read about later) 'lamented for Josiah.'

Josiah's sons and successors were mere empty semblances of kings, vassals of the ruling power in Jerusalem in their days, the power of Egypt. The first of these kings, Jehoahaz, was deposed by Pharaoh-necho, who made Eliakim king (who also was the son of Josiah), and turned his name to Jehoiakim. The last-named king 'gave the silver and gold to Pharaoh,' and levied for the purpose a regular land-tax, which supplied the sum that was paid to Pharaoh.

On the Euphrates a great change had taken place. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, overthrew Assyria, and by his victory over Egypt at Carchemish became the ruling power of the world. He reduced Judah to vassalage, and Jehoiakim became his servant for three years. But, encouraged by the Egyptian party at Jerusalem, the king rebelled against Babylon. Jeremiah, who was living at this time, exerted all his influence against the Egyptian party, and suffered severe persecution for his warnings of the destruction which was drawing near.

The weakness of the kings and the wickedness of the people increased, in spite of Jeremiah's prophecies of the punishment that was

in store. Soon after Jehoiakim's death, Jehoiachin his successor being king, Nebuchadnezzar came up against Jerusalem. Jehoiachin his successor being king, Nebuchadnezzar came up against Jerusalem. Jehoiachin came out and surrendered. The king of Babylon took him away with the golden vessels of the Temple, and all the princes, and the mighty land, and brought them captive to Babylon. The king of Babylon made Mattaniah (another son of Josiah) king at Jerusalem, and changed his name to Zedekiah. Though he had bound himself by an oath of fealty to Babylon, this king rebelled against his sovereign lord. Jeremiah, who looked upon the power of Babylon as the Lord's great instrument of judgment, had for years steadily opposed all rebellion against the Chaldeans. When Nebuchadnezzar came up and besieged Zedekiah, Jeremiah did his best to induce him to surrender, and increased his own unpopularity at Jerusalem as being no patriot. Zedekiah was almost persuaded, but the Egyptian party prevailed. They arrested Jeremiah, and he had to bear much at their hands, which we shall read of when we come to his book of prophecies.

At last Jerusalem was taken by Nebuchadnezzar. This time the city and the Temple were destroyed, a great number of the inhabitants slaughtered, and all but a few of the rest were carried away into captivity. Zedekiah suffered a terrible retribution for his broken oath. He was taken away to Riblah, for judgment before the king of Babylon, and there they slew his two sons before his face, and then put out his eyes, and took him away to Babylon.

The high estimate of the importance of keeping a promise which the Jews had reached at this time is shown in the condemnation of Zedekiah's breach of faith in revolting against the king of Babylon by Jeremiah, and afterwards by Ezekiel. Jerusalem had now been practically destroyed. But a few Jews who had been left to cultivate the ground under the government of Gedaliah, the patron of Jeremiah, dragged out a poor existence. Apparently the last remnant of the children of Israel was swallowed up by the huge heathen population of Babylon. There was no reason why the exiles of Judah should survive a captivity of the same kind as that which had caused the final disappearance of the Ten Tribes. But when all seems darkest to human eyes the Lord can still deliver those who trust Him, as the exiles in Babylon were in a few years' time to learn.

The next two books in the Bible are called the Books of Chronicles. The two books were originally one. The English name stands fairly for the Hebrew, but the Greek title is 'Things passed over'—that is, a supplement. Large parts of Chronicles were clearly

borrowed from Genesis, Samuel, and particularly from the First and Second Books of Kings. Chronicles has not the historical value of Kings, and its authority is inferior. As we have already made an extensive use of Chronicles in this chapter, a further examination of its contents has not been thought necessary.

The account of the Temple services has its value as a part of the history of public worship, and the author's treatment of the events in the nation's history reveals a distinctive standpoint—the priestly point of view.

The next two books, Ezra and Nehemiah, are closely connected with Chronicles, being practically a continuation, the end of Chronicles being found repeated in the opening of Ezra, and certain other points of resemblance being common to all three.

The Book of Ezra is the chief record of the history of the Jewish people from their first return from Babylon, under Zerubbabel, to the renewed movement of return, seventy-eight years later, under Ezra.

Ezra i. verse 1: 'Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, . . . saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem.' The proclamation went on to urge all Jews who were willing, to join the expedition to Jerusalem, and to help to build the House of the Lord there. The chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, with the priests and Levites, arose to go up to Jerusalem, and all who were about them helped them with gifts. Cyrus, the king, brought forth the vessels of the House of the Lord carried away by Nebuchadnezzar, and gave them back to Sheshbazzar, prince of Judah, as representative of the Jewish nation. In order to understand the sacrifices demanded by the Return, we must remember that the Exiles in Babylon had by this time attained a position of comfort and security which they had to abandon, in order to build again the ruins of Jerusalem.

The Book of Nehemiah was joined to the Book of Ezra in the Jewish Bible and treated as one work. Both were placed before Chronicles, which, as we have seen, formed with these books a connected whole. The Temple foundations were laid by Sheshbazzar, who headed the first return. Thus we see how God's marvellous scheme of redemption of Israel was successfully being carried on, in spite of all vicissitudes and all sinfulness. A delay of sixteen

years took place, owing to adverse influences brought to bear upon the Persian king, and then there was a fresh step forward. A great movement of exiles took place under Zerubbabel, a descendant of King David. This migration from Babylon numbered over forty-two thousand. A great deal was expected from this migration, and first the complete rebuilding of the Temple. But this was long delayed. They went each to his own city and let the House of God lie waste, says Haggai. In the autumn they all gathered to Jerusalem, and erected an altar, and offered burnt offerings to the Lord, 'but the foundation of the Temple of the Lord was not yet laid' (Ezra iii. verse 7).

They were stirred to action at last by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah. Then they relaid or renewed the old foundations amid the sounds of cymbals and trumpets, praising the Lord after the ordinance of David. Many of the ancient men who had seen the first house, when they saw the foundations of this house, wept with a loud voice, and many shouted for joy. But a strong opposition arose. The neighbouring tribes, the Samaritans, asked to be allowed to join in the building; but Zerubbabel and the rest of the exiles refused. The Samaritans, in revenge, carried their opposition to the court of Persia, and so influenced a succession of Persian kings that the work was seriously hindered. But at last by the joint efforts of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, the Temple was completed. This was in the reign of King Darius, who helped the exiles to complete their work. Thus the Temple was finished after six years of actual building. All the children of the captivity kept the dedication of the House of God with great joy. We are not surprised that they glorified in their Temple when we realise how much it meant to them. Their whole national existence centred in the Temple, which represented their illustrious past. The Temple was the outward and visible sign that God was with them, the God of their fathers. To see the Temple and its holy observances reinstated was to them identical with a new beginning of the true life.

After the completion of the Temple, a long break of sixty years appears in our records. The records begin again in the seventh year of Artaxerxes (Ezra vii. verse 8). In that year, Ezra the scribe comes before us as a leader in the restoration of the new Israel. Ezra was a man of high priestly family, who went up to Jerusalem with a decree given thus, according to Ezra vii. verses 12-28: 'Artaxerxes, king of kings, unto Ezra the priest, a scribe of the law of the God of heaven, perfect peace I make a decree that all they of the people of Israel, and of his priests and

Levites, in my realm, which are minded of their own freewill to go up to Jerusalem, go with thee. Forasmuch as thou art sent of the king, and of his seven counsellors, to inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, according to the law of thy God which is in thine hand; and to carry the silver and gold, which the king and his counsellors have freely offered unto the God of Israel, whose habitation is in Jerusalem.' The king's decree went on to give power to Ezra, to collect all the silver and gold he could, in the province of Babylon. The king made 'a decree to all the treasurers which are beyond the river that whatsoever Ezra, the priest, shall require be done speedily, unto an hundred talents of silver, and unto an hundred measures of wheat, and to an hundred baths of wine,' and so on (Ezra vii. verse 21). This is a copy of part of the letter which King Artaxerxes gave to Ezra the priest, and is written in Aramaic, a language which occurs elsewhere in the Bible only in the Book of Daniel, and in a short passage of Jeremiah.

Thirteen years after Ezra's arrival at Jerusalem, we read of the mission of Nehemiah, a high officer of the Persian court, and a devoted servant of God. He heard from certain men of Judah, that 'the remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire' (Nehemiah i. verse 3). Then Nehemiah tells us that he wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted and prayed to the God of heaven, and said (Nehemiah i. verse 5): 'I beseech thee, O Lord God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him, and observe his commandments: let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee. . . . We have dealt very corruptly against thee. . . . Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad amongst the nations: but if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there. Now these are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand. O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy

name: and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy, in the sight of this man. For I was the king's cup-bearer.'

Nehemiah ii. verses 1-8: 'And it came to pass in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that wine was before him: and I took up the wine, and gave it unto the king. Now I had not been beforetime sad in his presence. Wherefore the king said unto me, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? This is nothing else but sorrow of heart. Then I was very sore afraid, and said unto the king, Let the king live for ever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire? Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven. And I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it. And the king said unto me, (the queen also sitting by him,) For how long shall thy journey be? and when wilt thou return? So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time. Moreover I said unto the king, If it please the king, let letters be given me to the governors beyond the river, that they may convey me over till I come into Judah; and a letter unto Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the palace which appertained to the house, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall enter into. And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me.'

King Artaxerxes granted Nehemiah permission to journey to Jerusalem, and to see what could be done to ameliorate the condition of the Jews. He was made Tirshatha, or governor of Judah and Jerusalem, with the full powers of a high Persian official, and he accordingly arrived with an escort of Persian horsemen, which must have greatly impressed every one in Jerusalem. Nehemiah succeeded in obtaining the people's help, and began by endeavouring to rebuild the walls of the city of Jerusalem and to repair the different gates, and he did admirable work for his nation.

Nehemiah numbered the people, and they came to forty-two thousand and seventy. The building of the walls was vigorously opposed by the enemies of the Jews, headed by Sanballat. When they saw how quickly the work was progressing they invited Nehemiah down to a conference in the plain of Ono, but he refused, saying, I am doing a great work, and I cannot come down to you. The enemy tried by various means to frighten or coerce Nehemiah to

cease from the work, and his own friends urged him to take refuge in the House of God, the Temple, 'for they will come to slay thee' (Nehemiah vi. verse 10). Nehemiah's answer to his friends' request was worthy of his noble and courageous character. Nehemiah vi. verse 11: 'Should such a man as I flee? And who is there, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life. I will not go in.' At last the wall was finished in fifty-two days, and the enemy and all the heathen were much cast down, 'for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God' (Nehemiah vi. 16). After the walls were repaired, Ezra helped Nehemiah to complete the restoration of the new Israel.

Ezra had brought from Babylon the Book of the Law, probably the books which we know as the Pentateuch. And he and Nehemiah gathered the people together to an open space before the gates of Jerusalem, and there, from a pulpit of wood in the open air, he read aloud the Book of the Law to the people. Ezra read from dawn till noon, and went on reading for a week, and the Levites explained the laws to the people, *i.e.*, translated into the popular dialect the Hebrew original.

At a great day of humiliation beginning with a solemn fast, the people, under the leadership of Nehemiah, confessed their sins and failures, and made a public repentance, and entered into an oath and bound themselves by covenant to walk in God's law which was given by Moses, the servant of God. Nehemiah x. verse 30: 'And that we would not give our daughters unto the people of the land, nor take their daughters for our sons: and if the people of the land bring ware of any victuals on the Sabbath day to sell, that we would not buy it of them on the Sabbath, or on the Holy Day: and that we would leave the seventh year, and the exaction of every debt. Also we made ordinances for us, to charge ourselves yearly with the third part of a shekel for the service of the House of our God.'

This brings before us Nehemiah's definite purpose, to form the new Israel by a return to the old kingship of God, which they had found to be so ill-replaced by the rule of an earthly king. The new Israel was to be intensely national. It was to be a Church—but a national Church. Hence the rigid rules for separation from the people of the land, the engagement to refrain from mixed marriages, and from buying and selling on the Sabbath day. Hence also the provision for the offerings of money to maintain the Sanctuary and the services. This great purpose of Nehemiah and Ezra explains the absolute refusal of the Jewish exiles to allow the people of the land to help them to build their Temple. The people of the land

were the Samaritans, largely composed of alien colonists whom the Assyrian kings had brought to Samaria and the country round about to supply the place of the ten tribes carried away captive to Assyria by Sargon. The local worship of these Samaritans was largely mixed with idolatry: not only through the relics of heathen worship brought with them from Assyria, but also by the remains of the calf-worship at Bethel, and other false worship which they found among the relics of the old population of the northern kingdom. To keep completely separate from all admixture with the people of the land was absolutely necessary, if the ideal of a new Israel was to be realised.

Nehemiah, as we have seen, took all possible precautions to make this separation permanent. This idea of a rigidly separate people became intensified in process of time into a bitter prejudice on the part of the Jews against the Samaritans, which we find in full force in our Lord's time. Finally Nehemiah took steps to enlarge the population of Jerusalem by a wise arrangement. Nehemiah xi. verse 1: 'And the rulers of the people dwelt at Jerusalem: the rest of the people also cast lots to bring one of ten to dwell in Jerusalem the holy city, and nine parts to dwell in other cities. And the people blessed all the men, that willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem.'

Nehemiah returned to Babylon, and when he came back to Jerusalem found many of the abuses he had provided against still flourishing, and dealt with them with his accustomed vigour. Nehemiah xiii. verse 6: 'But in all this time was not I at Jerusalem: for in the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon came I unto the king, and after certain days obtained I leave of the king: and I came to Jerusalem, and understood of the evil that Eliashib did for Tobiah, in preparing him a chamber in the courts of the house of God. And it grieved me sore: therefore I cast forth all the household stuff of Tobiah. . . . Then I commanded, and they cleansed the chambers: and thither brought I again the vessels of the house of God, with the meat offering and the frankincense. And I perceived that the portions of the Levites had not been given them: for the Levites and the singers, that did the work, were fled every one to his field. Then contended I with the rulers, and said, Why is the house of God forsaken?'

He found also the Sabbath day broken even in Jerusalem. Nehemiah xiii. verse 17: 'Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath day?' Prompt in dealing with this, as with other abuses, he commanded that the gates should be shut and that they

should not be opened till after the Sabbath. Thus the New Israel, the Jewish Church, started on its way, and with all its faults made real progress, if we compare its state with the state of Israel sunken in idolatry and immorality in the days before the Captivity. The New Israel was based on a written book: the Book of the Law, the Pentateuch, brought by Ezra from Babylon, where a great work had been carried out by the Exiles, who wrote probably for the first time the laws, which had previously been a tradition of the priests. The exiles in Babylon, repentant for national sin, conceived by the guidance of God's Spirit a national reformation. And by such writings of theirs as the Book of Ezekiel prepared the way and formed the ideal of the New Israel.

Whereas the Old Israel depended on the living voice of the Prophets, the New Israel depended on the written law. That law, accepted as a standard of religion by the Jews of the Return under Ezra and Nehemiah, required to be explained. Hence, while maintaining the sanctuary at Jerusalem, it soon became necessary to have centres for the explanation of the law in other towns and villages. Thus arose the synagogues. Every village had its synagogue; most towns had several. The synagogue system was in full possession in our Lord's time. He and His disciples entered into the synagogue, as we go to church. The synagogues' services, like ours, had set prayers, two lessons, and a sermon. Thus through the synagogues our churches date back to the days of Nehemiah. We have a system of national religion based, in a real sense, on theirs. Our religion, though chiefly the religion of a Divine Person, Our Lord, is also the religion of a written book, the Bible. Careful instruction in that book, as an authoritative standard of religion, is recognised as necessary to-day. All this we trace back to the reformation carried out by Nehemiah.

Reading our Bible, we have noticed that most of the books have names of men. Only two in all the Bible are called after women. Ruth was one of them, and we remember how much we enjoyed reading about her. Now we come to the other book called by a woman's name, Esther. The name Esther signifies a star (Persian, 'stara'). In the Hebrew language Esther's original name was Haddassah—i.e., myrtle. A curious feature of the Book of Esther is that the word God is not once mentioned. But, all the same, the book teaches us some valuable lessons. The Jews held this Book of Esther in great regard, for reasons that we shall presently see.

Esther was a Jewish exile of a family of the tribe of Benjamin. She was an orphan, and was brought up by her cousin Mordecai (who adopted her as his daughter, both her parents being dead).

He lived in Shushan, the palace, and was attached to the court of the Persian king, Ahasuerus. Ahasuerus reigned from India to Ethiopia, and he is believed to be the Xerxes whom boys will remember at once, as well known in Greek history, who ended his expedition against the Greeks by losing the battle of Salamis, 480 B.C. On one occasion the nobles of Persia and Media were all assembled before him, and he was holding a great feast. King Ahasuerus had a queen whose name was Vashti. The feast was a deliberate occasion for heavy drinking. On the seventh day, when the king had taken too much wine, he sent for the queen to show her beauty to the people and the princes. This was a gross breach of Eastern manners, and an insult to the queen. The king had become coarse and senseless with drink, a degradation of the Divine likeness, which is a grievous sin.

I do not know if you have ever seen in a country lane or elsewhere, a man rolling about from side to side, so that you had to get out of his way. Strange to say, there are people who consider such a sight a matter for laughter and amusement. Why it should strike them in this way you and I cannot conceive. We think that it is one of the most pitiable and disgraceful things that can happen to any human being. This wretched drunken man is one of God's creatures. He is created in God's own image. Think if you can grasp to the full extent what too much beer-drinking, or spirit-drinking, or wine-drinking has turned him into. Instead of his being higher than all animals and having dominion over them, as the Creator particularly ordained, the poor degraded man, enslaved by drink, has fallen lower than they are. Your donkey, and your pet rabbit, and your kitten, and your pony, and your dog never take too much to drink. They have a certain limited measure of reason which guides them and which they obey. The drunken man had the gift of higher or human reason given to him, the gift that lifts him to the foremost position among God's creatures, and he has thrown away that precious gift for the sake of strong drink.

This wretched man's wife is waiting anxiously for him to come home, but in a sober state of mind, of course. Instead of this, when she sees him she has to be ashamed of him. Poor woman! she tries to screen her children from his bad example. Think what a sad home theirs is. This wretched man has completely forgotten himself, and his family, and his God. He has taken too much of that fatal drink, and it holds him in bondage. He is wasting precious health, precious time, precious affection, and his wages which ought to go towards making his family a happy one.

Let us learn a lesson from God's flowers. Let us learn a lesson from God's animals. What do they do? First of all they never take more than they need; they know when to stop; they keep the law of moderation, and best of all they drink water. Clear, beautiful crystal water. To drink water does not convert us into creatures of loathing. We will start a new régime at once and try their method.

From our digression about drinking we return now to King Ahasuerus, who had disgraced himself and insulted his wife because he was drunk. In this condition he had ordered, as we have seen, his queen to do something generally considered ignoble, which she refused to do. The seven princes of Persia and Media, who were the king's chamberlains, through their spokesman Memucan, advised the king to make an example of Vashti for her disobedience, to get rid of her altogether by an irrevocable decree, and to fill her place with another who should be better than she. One young woman out of all the virgins in the realm was chosen by the king to be queen in Vashti's place. This was not till some years after, for Vashti was disgraced in the third year (i. 3) of Ahasuerus (Xerxes), and Esther was made queen in his seventh year (ii. 16), the interval being occupied by the king in the expedition against Greece, from which he returned after his great defeat at sea. His choice fell upon Esther, whom the king loved above all others, so that he set the royal crown upon her head and made a great feast to all his princes, even Esther's feast.

Meanwhile the king had promoted Haman to be the foremost man under him in his kingdom, and every one bowed down before Haman and revered him with the exception of Mordecai. In his wrath against Mordecai because he bowed not down, Haman plotted to destroy the people of Mordecai, the whole of the Jews in Persia, and obtained letters from the king to all the provinces to destroy all the Jews, young and old, and to take their spoil for a prey. Thereupon Mordecai put on sackcloth with ashes and gave himself up to lamentation. Presently he was able to make known the whole plot of Haman to Esther, and the impending destruction of the Jews. He urged her to go in unto the king and make supplication to him for her people. Esther replied that whoever came in unto the king without being called, the king's law doomed to death, except one to whom the king held out the golden sceptre that he might live. 'But I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days.' At last Esther decided to risk her life for the sake of her people, and sent a message giving her decision to Mordecai: 'Go, gather together all the Jews that are

present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish.'

Thoroughly conscious of the great danger she was in, Esther set out on her perilous adventure. She came into the inner court of the king's house, and saw the king sitting on his throne, and when the king saw her standing in the court he held out to her the golden sceptre, and she drew near and touched it. Look at her in our picture, just as the king held out his sceptre, at the decisive moment of her fate. Esther v. 3: 'Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, queen Esther? and what is thy request? it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom.' Esther invited the king to a banquet, together with Haman, at which she promised to present her petition. At the banquet the king asked Esther: 'What is thy petition? and it shall be granted thee.' Esther, in reply, asked the king and Haman to another banquet on the morrow, at which her petition would be presented.

That night the king could not sleep, and commanded the book of the chronicles (or records of his reign) to be read to him. There he found it written that Mordecai had given information against two of the king's chamberlains who had plotted against their master. What reward, the king inquired, had Mordecai received for this great service? Nothing had been done for him, it appeared. Just at that moment Haman came in to ask the king about his project of hanging Mordecai on the gallows that had been erected for him. The king asked Haman, what shall be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour? Haman had no doubt the king meant Haman himself, so he advised that he should be arrayed in royal apparel, and put upon the horse the king was accustomed to ride on, with the crown royal upon his head, and led through the streets of the city by one of the king's most noble princes. Thereupon the king said to Haman that Mordecai the Jew was the man the king delighteth to honour, and Haman was to lead him through the city. This was done, and Haman returned mourning to his house.

Then followed the banquet which Esther the queen had prepared for the king and Haman. At the banquet the king asked, 'What is thy petition, queen Esther? and it shall be granted thee.' Esther replied that her petition was for her own life and the life of her people. The king asked who dared to threaten them, 'And Esther said, The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman.' The king in his wrath walked into the palace garden, and when he returned

found Haman praying for his life to the queen. Then the king's indignation found voice, and as he spoke the attendants covered Haman's face, which was the preparation for execution. And one of the chamberlains suggested the gallows that Haman had had made for Mordecai. 'Then the king said, Hang him thereon,' and they hanged him thereon.

That day the king gave the house of Haman to Queen Esther, and took off his ring which he had taken from Haman and gave it to Mordecai. Then Esther entreated the king to stop the massacre of the Jews while there was yet time. The king could not reverse the letters sent by Haman, but wrote in his own name, and sealed with the king's ring, letters to all parts of the kingdom, empowering the Jews to defend themselves and to slay their enemies, and take their spoil for a prey.

Thus Mordecai was raised to the highest position in the king's house, and the Jews smote their enemies with the sword, and even in Shushan the palace they slew five hundred men. Thus the Jews triumphed over their enemies; and Mordecai the Jew and Esther the queen, as a festival in memorial of this great deliverance, confirmed the days of Purim in their times appointed. Esther ix. 32: 'And the decree of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim, and it was written in the book.'

The Jewish feast of Purim was held on the fourteenth and fifteenth days of Adar (February-March), and followed a fast on the thirteenth day, called the fast of Esther. The Book of Esther which was highly esteemed by the Jews, was called the Roll, as the favourite one of the Five Rolls, of which the others were the Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, and Ecclesiastes. It was read every year at the feast of Purim. The book is a record of a woman's noble patriotism, which made her not only risk her high position as queen but her very life to deliver her oppressed countrymen. Though God's name is never mentioned in this book, the workings of an unseen but mighty Providence are felt throughout it.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BOOK OF JOB.

THE Book of Job is one of the greatest religious poems of the world. It displays throughout a leading characteristic of Eastern thought, a consciousness that there are things beyond the range of man's following, and that God and the counsels of God are the chief of these. Psalm cxxxix. verse 6: 'Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.'

This poem of Job is thrown into the form of a dramatic composition, part of it in verse and part in prose. The prologue, or introduction, and the Epilogue, or conclusion of the book, are written in prose as distinguished from the dialogues, which are in verse. Though the poem itself was probably written at a late date, it is based on an exceedingly ancient tradition. Job was a real historical person, probably in the age of the patriarchs. He lived in the land of Uz, possibly on the borders of Idumæa and Arabia. The Arabs still claim the Hauran to be the land of Job. And this well accords with the allusions of the poem, with the robber hands of Sabeans from Sabæa (Sheba) in South Arabia, with the desert streams and rocks, and with the whole circumstances of the pastoral life described. Job was what we should call to-day a wealthy Arab Sheikh. He owned great numbers of sheep, camels, oxen, and asses. He was, of course, not a Jew, and the scene is entirely outside of Palestine, and the worship is of the simplest patriarchal kind. There is no direct reference to the laws and customs or beliefs of the Jews. There is not an allusion to Jewish history. Job's God is not the God of a chosen people, but the God of all mankind. If we take the Book of Job to be a consummate work of art, written in its final form at a late date, possibly during the Captivity or soon after the Return, we are better able to understand the depth and complexity of the religious problems it raises, problems which could hardly have had any existence in this developed form for a man living in patriarchal times. Contrast the absence of any questioning of God's dealings which we find in Abraham with the questioning, problem-haunted mind which we find in the Book of Job. Job was a man of high and noble character, and deeply religious, for in the Prologue we read that his sons and his daughters were feasting, and

when this was over Job 'rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually' (Job i. verse 5). Intercession for others is one of the true signs of deep-rooted religion, and this, we see, was one of the habits of Job's daily life.

The Prologue introduces us to Job at the time of his prosperity. The opening words of the Prologue are (chapter i. verse 1): 'There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.'

You see the whole character of the man before you: you also see here a picture of the outward man, in which a distinguished Italian artist has handed down an ideal or imaginative portrait of the patriarch to us. In the scene in Heaven, which is part of the Prologue, we read the following (Job i. verse 6): 'Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them. And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? Then Satan answered the Lord and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord.'

Of course it is obvious that this scene in Heaven is a dramatic picture, figurative and imaginative, and not to be taken literally. At the period when the Book of Job was written in its final form, it is perfectly evident that the idea of Satan was not the same as ours is to-day. Satan represents to us our experience of evil as gathered up in the conception of one evil spirit; and part of our experience, the beginnings of evil, is that temptation comes to us from without. In some cases temptation assails us with a knowledge of our weakness, and a malignity that seems to point to a person at our side who has evil intentions against us.

The conception of Satan is subject to the law of gradual develop-

ment in the Old Testament. It becomes definite and clear only in works written after the Exile. For example, in 2 Samuel xxiv. verse 1 we read: 'And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go number Israel in Judah.' And David, thus moved by the Lord, compelled Joab to number the people. The result of this numbering was a terrible judgment from the Lord on the nation. Three-score and ten thousand died by the pestilence which David had chosen, as the best choice of the three punishments offered by the Lord through David's seer, Gad. This account in the version of the same story after the Exile, 1 Chronicles xxi. verse 1, takes the following form: 'And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.'

The altered form may be thus explained. In the earlier period of the history of Israel, even till after the return from the Exile, there was no difficulty felt in ascribing everything, good and bad alike, to Jehovah. The Hebrew's vivid consciousness of God saw God in everything and everything in God. Gradually his conception of God, as the All-powerful Cause of all things, was modified by a new conception of God as All Good. The difficulty of accounting for the presence of evil in a world ruled by an All-powerful and All-good God began to exercise more pressure, and Satan, originally an angel of God sent to try men, became more and more the responsible cause of evil.

Probably the earliest mention of Satan by name in the Bible is to be found in Zechariah iii. 1: 'And he shewed me Joshua, the high priest, standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him.' When we compare the account of Satan in Job, taking the actual composition of Job to be after the Exile, with Micah's vision in 1 Kings xxii. 22, we see that the relations of Jehovah and the evil spirit in Micah's vision, and the relations of Jehovah and Satan in the Prologue of the Book of Job, are considerably altered. The situation is almost the same in both cases; in both we have the Court of Heaven pictured for us. In the first case the Lord asks who shall persuade Ahab that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-Gilead. Then a spirit came forth and stood before the Lord, and offered to persuade him, as a lying spirit in the mouth of his prophets. Then God says, 'Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also; go forth and do so' (1 Kings xxii. 22).

Now, in the scene in Heaven given us in Job, Satan takes his place among the sons of God, and gives an account of his actions, and takes his orders from God. But here God is not in accord

with the spirit of his malicious angel. God supports Job's character and cause. Satan (the adversary) attacks both. God desires the vindication of Job's righteousness; Satan, the exposure of its speciousness. Good-will to the righteous man is the characteristic of God in Job; ill-will is the characteristic of Satan. But God and Satan are not represented as distinctly hostile powers. Satan gives account of his doings to God, and requires permission from God before he can assail Job, and is obliged to keep to the conditions God has laid down. But the subject is a very deep one. We have only put forward a few suggestions towards a better understanding, while it is certainly the teaching of the Bible—more fully developed in the New Testament—that Satan exists as a centre of evil influence. This is part of the great Problem of Evil, and our best attitude towards that problem is a frank acknowledgment of human limitations. The wisest course with all such problems is to adopt the attitude of St. Paul, so well expressed in 1 Corinthians xiii. 12: 'Now we see in a mirror darkly (R.V.), but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know (fully) even as also I am (fully) known.'

To return to Job. First a messenger came to Job to say that the Sabæans had carried away his oxen and his asses, and slain his servants with the edge of the sword. While the first messenger was speaking, another arrived to say that fire from God had fallen from heaven (lightning) and burnt up the sheep and the servants. Before he had done, another came and said that three bands of Chaldæans had fallen on the camels and carried them away, and slain the servants with the edge of sword. While he was yet speaking came another, and said that while his sons and daughters were feasting, a great wind from the wilderness blew down the house upon their heads, and the young men were dead. Here is the grand way in which we see Job receiving the terrible news and accepting it as from God (Job i, 21):—'Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.'

Satan meanwhile was beginning to realise that he had not so easy a task as he had supposed. He found that he was powerless to overcome Job. Nothing seemed to move the righteous man from his fixed principles; Job remained steadfast in his belief in God. In response to Satan's assertion that if God touched Job with disease he would curse God to his face, God gave Satan permission to touch Job, and Satan went forth from God's presence and smote Job with sore boils, *i.e.*, with a terrible form of leprosy, called elephantiasis. Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou

still retain thine integrity? Curse (R.V. renounce) God and die. But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?' (Job ii. 9).

Job's three friends Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar heard of the evil which had come upon him, and 'made an appointment together to come to mourn with him, and to comfort him. . . . So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great (Job. ii. 11).

Job felt their silent sympathy very deeply, and his anguish burst forth in an exceedingly bitter cry for the deliverance of death. He longs for the place where 'the wicked cease from troubling,' and where 'the weary art at rest.' He wishes that he had never been born. His friends begin at first very gently to hint at the view they hold of his sufferings. Their view is the popular view of the time, and it was mainly for the purpose of combating this view, and showing it to be untenable, that the Book of Job was written.

That view may be briefly put thus: It holds that God is the Absolute Ruler of the Universe, and that men are always punished and rewarded exactly according to their deserts in this life. All suffering, according to this view, is a penalty for sin, and all prosperity is a reward for goodness. Hence Job's friends conclude that his exceptional sufferings are the punishment of exceptional sin, and they press him, gently at first, and gradually more urgently, to the only course that will meet his position, as they see it, namely, that he should make a clean breast of his guilt and frankly confess his sin. Job continues to defend himself. He is perfectly convinced, that though not free from the general imperfections of man, he is unconscious of any special guilt, and his sufferings are, in his opinion, far too severe and exceptional to be explained as due to his share of the general imperfection of man. But so deep is his sense of his sufferings, that he goes beyond the mere cry for the deliverance of death with which he began, and bitterly arraigns God for the cruel bondage to which he is subjected. His friend Bildad replies with the strongest disapproval of Job's attitude (Job viii. verse 3): 'Doth God pervert judgment? or doth the Almighty pervert justice? If thy children have sinned against him, and he have cast them away for their transgression; . . . if thou wert pure and upright; surely now he would awake for thee, and make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous. . . . Behold, God will not cast away a perfect man, neither will he help the evil doers.'

Job, in his reply to his friends, admits that no man can be just before God. God's power is so great, that no man, however innocent, can successfully plead before with him. But so far from God's justice discriminating between the guilty and the guiltless, he smites all alike. Job ix. verse 22: 'This is one thing, therefore I said it, He destroyeth the perfect and the wicked. If the scourge slay suddenly, he will laugh at the trial of the innocent. The earth is given into the hand of the wicked: he covereth the faces of the judges thereof; if not, where, and who is he?' (R.V., 'if it be not he, who is it?') He goes on to wonder what is the purpose for which God afflicts him. He arrives at the agonising thought that all God's favours in the past were only poured out, that He might torture him in the end. The more Job asserts his innocence and arraigns God's justice, the more plainly and frankly do his friends condemn him. Eliphaz says (Job xv. verse 4): 'Yea, thou castest off fear, and restrainest prayer before God. For thy mouth uttereth thine iniquity, and thou chooseth the tongue of the crafty. Thine own mouth condemneth thee, and not I: yea, thine own lips testify against thee.'

Then he goes on to draw a lurid picture of the man with an evil conscience, too long to quote here, but drawn with extraordinary power. At last, after several further speeches, intended by his friends to arouse Job's conscience, they directly accuse him of the great and flagrant sins they have before only hinted at, and suggested. The whole long series of speeches requires to be studied in detail, and is full of passages that will repay such study.

And now comes the grand climax of the poem. The Lord himself appears and answers Job. Chapters xxxviii. and xxxix.: 'Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind,' &c., &c. This theophany, or manifestation of God, goes on in a succession of questions, each of which carries home to Job the sense of his own insignificance and ignorance, and the sense of the Omnipotence and Omniscience of God. Then Job, overwhelmed, briefly answers (Job xl. verse 4): 'Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken; but I will not answer: yea, twice; but I will proceed no further.'

This first speech of God completely convinces Job of the transcendent greatness of his Creator, and he feels and owns his presumption in daring to contend with God. The teaching of Jehovah's speech is plain. If Job cannot understand the mystery of the visible world, how can he hope to understand the mystery of God's government of the world, and especially the great mystery of His government of man?

The second speech, though it contains the celebrated descriptions of Behemoth (elephant) and Leviathan (crocodile), falls short of the first. It is perhaps not too much to say with a great Hebraist, 'the first speech of Jehovah transcends all other descriptions of the wonders of Creation, of the greatness of the Creator, which are to be found in the Bible or elsewhere.'

Job is completely convinced by the words of the Almighty and brought to a right frame of mind, a deep humility that leaves no room for the old doubts of God's justice. Job xlii. verse 3: 'Therefore have I uttered that I understand not' (says Job to God); 'things too wonderful for me which I know not I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.'

The dialogues between Job and his friends solve the main problem of the book, by showing the falsity of the traditional theory that all suffering is a penalty for sin and all prosperity a reward for goodness; and this solution is approved by the Almighty Himself. Speaking out of the whirlwind the Almighty teaches the lesson, as true essentially to-day as when it was written, that it is impossible for finite man with his necessarily limited vision to enter into the counsels of God, or to judge the justice of the dealings of God with man. The minor question which is also answered is this: Can man love and fear God disinterestedly? The history of Job shows that he can.

The Epilogue which immediately follows brings Job's troubles to an end. God commends Job and accepts him, and severely condemns his friends. Then Job, forgiving all their charges, prays for his friends. Job ends happily (xlii. verse 12): 'So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses. He had also seven sons and three daughters After this Job lived an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons and his sons' sons, even four generations.'

We have said that the first speech of Jehovah in the Theophany in the Book of Job (chapters 38 and 39) is described by a great Hebraist as of transcendent grandeur. A yet more remarkable testimony to the worth of the whole book comes from a great independent judge of literature, Thomas Carlyle: 'I call that book, apart from all theories about it, one of the grandest things ever written with pen. One feels indeed as if it were not Hebrew: such a noble universality, different from noble patriotism or noble sectarianism, reigns in it. A noble book: all men's book. It is

our first oldest statement of the never-ending problem—man's destiny and God's way with him here on earth; grand in its sincerity and in its simplicity. There is nothing written, I think, in the Bible or out of it, of equal literary merit.'

The problem of the suffering of the righteous in this world is with us still, and when we see undeserved misfortunes crowding on the head of one who has done nothing to deserve such punishments, we sometimes feel at a loss to understand this mystery of God's government. But we have guidance Job did not possess to enable us to retain our trust in God's love and care in the face of what seems to us so contrary to such faith. We look to the Cross of Christ, and there we see what must have seemed to those who saw the Crucifixion the cruellest justice, the cruellest infliction of unspeakable suffering on The Sinless One.

Anybody who had the questioning mind of Job and saw the mockery of the Trial of Christ and the atrocious injustice of His Crucifixion might well have asked, standing by the foot of the cross, 'Why has the Father He trusted in thus forsaken His Son? Yet we, who see now that the Son won His perfect victory through those sufferings, that, as the Old Fathers said, 'He reigns from the Cross,' can understand that the suffering was necessary to the victory, and also how it is that the Apostle boldly describes this supreme instance of permitted injustice as the supreme instance of Divine love. 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should . . . have everlasting life' (St. John iii. verse 16).

CHAPTER XII.

PSALMS—PROVERBS—ECCLESIASTES—THE SONG OF SONGS.

WE have come now to the Book of Psalms, the well-known collection of religious poems that bear that name. The word Psalms came to be employed for these religious poems in this way. The translators of the Septuagint, or Greek version of the Bible, used the Greek word *Psalmos* (which means, first of all, the music of a stringed instrument) to translate the Hebrew word *Mizmor*, which means a song with an accompaniment of instrumental music. The whole collection was called Psalms, or the Book of Psalms, by our Lord (Luke xx. 42). In the Hebrew Bible the title of the Book of Psalms is 'Praises,' a title which probably was due to the use of the book in the services of the Temple. Another Hebrew title of the book was 'Prayers.' The Psalter, a later word for the Book of Psalms, originally signified in Greek a stringed instrument. Most of the Psalms have titles, but the meanings of the titles are very uncertain, and often have to be admitted to be conjectural.

We have already explained the word Psalm (*mizmor*), the title prefixed to fifty-seven psalms, generally with the addition of the name of the author, who is usually David. 'Song,' a general term for canticle, occurs in the titles of thirty psalms. A word which occurs very frequently in the Psalms, though it does not occur in the titles, is the word 'Selah,' which is generally taken to signify a direction for the stringed instruments to strike up. The word occurs seventy-one times in the Psalms; elsewhere in the Old Testament only three times, in Habakkuk iii. There are many other titles in the Psalms, but we must be content to mention only a few. A 'song of degrees,' or goings-up, is the title of fifteen psalms (cxx.-cxxxiv.), which seem to have been a separate collection. The probable meaning comes from the use of the word to go up, to signify the making of a pilgrimage to Jerusalem at the great festivals. The songs of the goings-up would signify the songs sung at such pilgrimages. Some of the titles refer to the authorship, or to the source from which they were taken.

There are one hundred and fifty Psalms. Of these one bears

the name of Moses. Seventy-three psalms (nearly half the number) the name of David, but this only means that they belonged to a collection, and bore King David's name as the most illustrious of its authors. Ten psalms bear the name of the sons of Korah, which means, not that the sons of Korah composed each psalm as joint authors, but that each psalm which bears this title comes from the collection of the sons of Korah. Probably this is also the case with the twelve psalms which bear the name of Asaph, who was one of David's chief musicians. Two psalms bear the name of Solomon. Owing to its use in the daily services of the Church, people are far more familiar with the Prayer-book version of the Psalms than with the version in the Bible. The Prayer-book version is much older than the Bible version. The former version comes from the Great Bible, of which the first edition was published in 1539, and which itself was a revised form of Mathew's Bible, published 1537. The version of the Psalms in Mathew's Bible was written by Coverdale, and based on the Latin and German versions. From the last edition of this Bible, in 1540, the Prayer-book Psalter is taken. Our familiar version of the Psalms in the Bible of 1611 is more accurate than the Prayer-book Psalter, but much less musical and melodious. The Prayer-book version, from its regular use in devotion, has helped to form the religious habit in mind in the nation, and it is through it that the Hebrew Psalmists have exercised, and do still exercise, their marvellous influence on the religious consciousness in England to-day.

The emotional religious life of the individual finds a more perfect expression through the Psalms than through any other writings. The Book of Psalms has been, with reason, called the heart of the Bible. The meaning of such perfect expression of personal feeling towards God, and personal experience of His dealings, is not confined to the sense in which the Psalmist wrote, but grows in richness of significance with the passage of the centuries. Though the words are the words of the Jewish Church, yet the Christian Church uses them as finding them luminous with the beams of Him who is its Sun.

The Psalms are religious lyric poetry, and the writers of this poetry prepared the way for Christ, as truly as did the prophets. The regular use of the Psalms in the worship of the Temple kept bright the Messianic hope in the hearts of the people. They pointed to the coming of the Messiah in various aspects, and in different manners, though, till the actual coming illuminated the foreshadowings of the divine purpose, those foreshadowings had been faint and dim, except to the future-seeing eye of some

prophet, or to the simple faith of devout souls. In two aspects especially the Messiah is set forth in the Psalms.

First, as the Kingly Messiah. In the Kingdom of David, which was the ideal kingdom of Israel, the king regarded himself, and was regarded, not as an Eastern autocrat, but as God's anointed, appointed by God as His Viceroy, in which capacity he was promised the sovereignty of the nations. The Messianic king is regarded as God's son and representative in Psalm ii., and in Psalm xviii., David's great Psalm of Thanksgiving, where David says: 'Thou hast delivered me from the striving of the people; and thou hast made me the head of the heathen: a people whom I have not known shall serve me.' David sees that he was given this position as head of the heathen or nations in order that he may offer thanks unto the Lord among the nations and give praises unto His name. David's successors failed to fulfil David's hopes, and pious souls who used the Psalms in worship were led to look for the coming of a king who would bring to pass the long-postponed fulfilment.

Secondly, the Messiah is regarded as the Suffering Messiah. If the minds of men had to be prepared for the Kingly Messiah, much more had they to be prepared for the Suffering Messiah. Suffering of the good for God's sake had to be shown to be the way to victory, the way of deliverance for mankind. In a very wondrous way the foreshadowings of the sufferings of Christ in the Psalms give a picture of the Messiah that was to be found true many centuries after, even in minute details. This does not seem to have been perceived by the Jewish Church. It was Christ Himself who first revealed to His disciples that His sufferings had been fore-ordained. Among the Psalms that speak of the Suffering Messiah, the twenty-second Psalm is pre-eminent. It foretells the Passion, and our Lord's use of the first words on the Cross at the most solemn time of His suffering: 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' marks it out unmistakably as pointing to Him, and fulfilled in Him.

Take again the sixty-ninth Psalm, which tells of one persecuted for the sake of God: 'For thy sake have I borne reproach; shame hath covered my face.' Again: 'Reproach hath broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness. . . . They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.' Of these and many other Messianic Psalms it has been said that they have a primary historical sense which concerns the circumstances under which they were written, and a secondary prophetic sense, the sense in which they are now understood by the Christian

Church. As a matter of fact, the primary and secondary sense are steps in the interpretation of God's purpose. That is, it was the illumination which came from the actual sufferings of Christ that at last made the Psalms of His Passion fully understood.

One more group of Psalms we may glance at here. As we can see now, they point to the central event of the world's history, the Incarnation. Those are the Psalms that look forward to the Coming of God Himself, both as Judge and Redeemer. Take, for example, the words of such a psalm as Psalm lxviii. verse 18: 'Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.' This is applied to our Lord by St. Paul in Ephesians iv. verse 8. Again the words of the Psalm cii. verses 25, 26: 'Of old hast thou laid the foundations of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shall thou change them, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end,' are applied by the author of the Epistle of the Hebrews to God's Son, 'whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds' (chapter i. verse 2).

Thus the Psalms prepared the minds of men for the Coming of Christ. A difficulty which tries many, and tries them repeatedly, owing to the regular use of the Psalter in church, is to be found in the many expressions in which the Psalmist entreats God to destroy his enemies, or rejoices when that destruction is accomplished. Of course, such prayers for vengeance are by no means confined to the Psalms: there are numbers of them in the Book of Jeremiah. The explanation is that they belong to the Old Dispensation—the Rule of the Law, which is based on the principle of retaliation—and not to the New Dispensation, based on the Revelation of an All-loving God given at a later date in Jesus Christ. Our Lord clearly revealed that the Old Dispensation was inferior to the New. His words are unmistakable. Matthew v. verse 43: 'Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.'

We must remember that it was a great step forward when the men of the Old Testament, instead of taking vengeance privately themselves, were content to leave vengeance to God, as David was when he spared Nabal. See 1 Samuel xxv. verses 32, 33, 39. The Psalmists, in common with the Prophets, saw life as a continual

battle between God and His enemies, and when the ungodly were triumphant and the godly were overwhelmed by them, it seemed to them that the cause of God was losing, and in praying for the destruction of the wicked, they felt they were praying for the cause and the triumph of God.

We have been taught to distinguish between the sin and the sinner. They identified them. It was clear that wickedness was to be destroyed, and they could not separate this destruction from the destruction of the wicked. Again, the prayers for vengeance which seem to us most revolting are those which include the wrongdoer's whole family in the punishment, as Psalm cix. verse 9: 'Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow. Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg. . . . Let there be none to extend mercy unto him: neither let there be any to favour his fatherless children. Let his posterity be cut off.'

In the days of the Old Testament writers, as we have before observed in dealing with Abraham's intended sacrifice of Isaac, a man's family was regarded as a part of the man and as rightly included in any retribution for his wickedness. The rights and responsibilities of the individual members of the family as independent from the father, did not then exist.

These prayers for vengeance, be it remembered, belong to the Jewish Church, which realised God's universal justice, but not His universal Love. The spirit of the Jewish Church expresses itself in the words of King Joash (2 Chronicles xxiv. verse 22): 'The Lord look upon it, and require it.' The spirit of the Christian Church expresses itself in the prayer of the dying Stephen for his murderers (Acts vii. verse 60): 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge,' which is evidently a faithful following of our Lord's prayer while they were nailing Him to the Cross.

A word more. The Psalmists wrote as men who longed intensely for God to assert His power and to rule on the earth. That was the truth which was most necessary, and most deeply realised in their time. Their passionate longing for Divine Justice to assert itself was right. The mode in which they expected the Divine Justice to assert itself was misconceived by their human blindness; human nature being steeped in imperfection. Furthermore, though they did not regard death as complete annihilation, they regarded the after-life in 'Sheol' as a life of sadness in a Shadowland. Therefore they regarded the assertion of God's justice as to be effected here on earth, now or never.

In using these imprecatory Psalms, it may be found helpful to let them remind us of our great privileges and blessings under the

New Dispensation, and to let the thought of their passionate devotion to the cause of God, though so far from the full light of the Christian Dispensation, urge us who have emerged from the twilight of the Old Dispensation to emulate their earnestness. They walked often more successfully in the way of the Lord in the twilight of the gradual dawning of Revelation than we do in the broad daylight of its noon.

A few last words as to the value of the Psalms. Our Lord's habitual use of them shows what a comfort and support they were to the most hardly tried and the only Perfect Life. Not only did He use the Psalms upon the Cross, and sing with His disciples the great Hallel Psalm (cxiii.—cxviii.), at the Last Supper, but with the words of a psalm on His lips He died. He found in the Psalms the predictions of His own personal experience, as in the words He spoke to His disciples concerning the traitor Judas (John xiii. verse 18): 'I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.' The words of Psalm xli. verse 9, are: 'Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.'

After His Resurrection again, Our Lord instructed His disciples, when He appeared to them in the upper room, as to the way in which the Psalms, as well as the other writings of the Old Testament, had prepared for His Advent. Luke xxiv. verse 44: 'And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things.' Our Lord's teaching and example turned the minds of the Christian Church to the Psalms, and to the study of them we owe the Magnificat, the Benedictus, and the Uunc Dimittis.

St. Paul urges on his converts at Ephesus the use of the Psalms. Ephesians v. verse 19: 'Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.' Also in Colossians iii. verse 16: 'Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.'

The experience of many generations of Christians since then has confirmed the experience of those of the first century, and established the supreme value of the Psalms, as the natural expression of religious emotion under all circumstances and for all sorts and conditions of men. It has been well said by Stanley, 'the Psalter alone, by its manifold applications and uses in after times, is a vast palimpsest written over and over again; illuminated, illustrated by every conceivable incident and emotion of men and nations.

We now pass on to the Book of Proverbs, which is always associated with the name of King Solomon. We read in 1 Kings iv. 32, of Solomon's fame as a writer of proverbs and songs: 'And he spake three thousand proverbs, and his songs were a thousand and five.' Part of the Book of Proverbs is plainly stated to be his, that is, to be at least a collection made by him, or of which he was the most distinguished author, namely, the portion beginning at chapter x. 1: 'The proverbs of Solomon,' and ending at chapter xxii. 16. This is undoubtedly the centre of the book.

Each verse of this central portion consists of seven to eleven words complete in itself. This part of the book consists of Proverbs so called; the previous chapters of the book are a kind of introduction to the whole book which follows. This introduction consists of the praise of wisdom, and Solomon is named as the author; but in verse 6 the intention is expressed of attaining to the understanding and interpretation of 'the words of the wise and their dark sayings.' The central part of the book—chapters x. 1—xxii. 16—stated to be the Proverbs of Solomon, is followed by the section chapters xxii. 17—xxiv. 22. This section is headed 'The Words of the Wise.' 'Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise.' To this is added a short section headed, 'These things also belong to the wise.'

The next division of the book is a collection of Proverbs headed, 'These are also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out.' Here, too, as in the section consisting of chapters x. 1—xxii. 16, each verse forms an independent proverb, with but few exceptions.

Chapter xxx. is headed, 'The words of Agur the son of Jakeh.' Chapter xxxi. is headed, 'The words of king Lemuel, the prophecy' (*i.e.*, oracle, R.V.), 'that his mother taught him,' cautioning him against drink and bad women. This teaching of a wise mother says: 'It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink.' Total abstinence is plainly recommended as a part of true wisdom. The purpose of the Book

of Proverbs is to teach the art of living well; the wisdom of daily life is the wisdom advised and extolled.

The whole book ends with a beautiful passage of praise of the virtuous woman. It is plain, then, from the contents of the book itself, the safest source from which to seek information, that the Book of Proverbs is a compilation of sayings by different authors. It is a part of the 'wisdom-literature' of the Jews. It is full of practical morals, with very few references to religious beliefs, which are taken for granted. It studies and illustrates the principles of human conduct, and traces out to their consequences the practical results of right and wrong doing. Considerable knowledge of external nature as well as great knowledge of human nature is displayed, and in this connection we may remember that in 1 Kings iv. 33, it is said of Solomon that 'he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes. And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom.' For the proverbs themselves we refer our readers to the book, especially to the section headed, 'The Proverbs of Solomon,' chapter x.-xxii. verse 15, which are proverbs properly so called, and chapters xxv.-xxix., which are very similar.

We come next to a book which bears as its title the name of Ecclesiastes, the translation into Greek of the Hebrew word *Koheleth*, meaning the preacher, or orator, or teacher, which is the name repeatedly given to Solomon in this book. It is composed of meditations on individual and social life ascribed, by perfectly legitimate because perfectly transparent literary device, to the great king Solomon. The writer begins by putting into Solomon's mouth the conclusions to which his study of life had brought him: 'Vanity of vanities . . . vanity of vanities, all is vanity. What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?' (chapter i. verses 2, 3).

Is life worth living? and how best is happiness to be attained? are the questions of permanent interest which the writer has set himself to answer, and if his answer is not satisfactory, and never confident, he at least retains his faith in the government of God. He supports his sad conclusion of the vanity of life by examining the various fields of a man's work, and by showing the uselessness of it all. There is a weary disgust with life; a profound disillusionment, which is entirely unlike the temper and spirit of the men of the Old Testament. He begins by showing that whatever a man works at, his work has no lasting value. Even the pursuit of knowl-

edge he finds a failure, its results bringing nothing but perplexity. He then tries the pursuit of pleasure, but finds that pleasure brings no lasting satisfaction. His experience, indeed, tells him that wisdom is better than folly; yet the gain of wisdom he finds to be merely ephemeral, for he sees that inevitable death comes and equalises the lot of the wise man and the fool. Nor does he think the pursuit of riches any better than the pursuit of wisdom, for when obtained none can tell who will inherit them. Ecclesiastes ii. verse 19: 'Who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? yet shall he have rule over all my labour wherein I have laboured This is also vanity.'

The conclusion at which he arrives is given thus in chapter ii. 24: 'There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour.' Yet, even here, in his complete disillusionment, he recognises the government of God; he accepts the world as it is—as ruled by God—saying: 'This also I saw; that it was from the hand of God' (verse 24). He believes in God, but it is not the joyous confident belief of a David, but the admission of a world-worn and a world-weary spirit, that does not think life in any way worth living. He sees that not only is individual life a failure, but the life of the community is no better. Chapter iii. 16, 17: 'And moreover I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there. I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work.'

He seems to be convinced that there is no future life to balance the injustice of this life, and this want of belief in a future life is perhaps one of the chief secrets of his continual depression. To understand our author it must be remembered that at the time he wrote the hope of immortality was at best a dim intuition, for our Lord Jesus Christ had not yet brought immortality and life to light by His Gospel. Chapter iii. verses 18-20: 'I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts. For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust and all turn to dust again.'

In disappointment and disillusionment the book ends as it began. Everything is vanity, and the enjoyment in moderation of such pleasures as God permits us to have in this puzzling life is the best

course, the author thinks, that is left to man to take. Still, Ecclesiastes does not believe that the world is going from bad to worse. He does not give up his belief in God. He thinks it is man's duty to enjoy the gifts of God, and to remember that the world is ordered by God. Even when he has a glimpse of a life beyond the grave, and says, 'Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it' (chapter xii. verse 7), he has no thought of the vision of God, and counts even the return to God, like everything else, to be vanity. The Epilogue ends with the well-known passage, wisely laying down the one thing needful for man. Chapter xii. verses 13,14: 'Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.'

The Song of Songs, commonly called Canticles, which is the exact translation of the Hebrew title of the next book, meaning the finest of songs, was publicly read in the Synagogues at the great festival of the Passover. It is a poem and evidently a dialogue. There are three principal characters—Solomon, the Shulamite maiden, and her shepherd lover. The religious and moral purpose of the poem is to bring out the importance of human love between man and woman as given by God, and the duty of regarding it seriously. This is the first meaning of the poem. The plan of it is as follows. Solomon had gone on a royal progress to the north of his kingdom and met with a Shulamite maiden (probably a form of Shunamite, from Shunem, a town in Issachar) and brought her to Jerusalem, where he hoped to win her love and persuade her to give up her country home for life at his court. She had, however, already given her heart to a young shepherd, and the great king's attentions failed to make her forget or abandon him. In the end she was allowed to return to Shunem, where she was restored to her lover. In the eighth chapter the lovers appear arm in arm, and declare the supreme value of genuine love over all that can be purchased by rank or money.

Chapter viii. 5-7: 'Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved? I raised thee up under the apple tree; there thy mother brought thee forth: there she brought thee forth that bare thee. Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods

drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be condemned.'

This is the direct interpretation of the Song of Songs, and is the interpretation of some of the best commentators, and this appears to be the primary meaning. But a secondary interpretation may be added to this, with a gain in the richness of the meaning. The heroine's lover represents God. Solomon represents the attractions of the world unable to win the hearts of God's faithful servants from him. There is also another interpretation, more familiar from the chapter-headings in our authorised version, by which the poem is made to be a prophetic description of the love between Christ and His Church, and this has been varied by the view that it is the love of the individual soul for the Lord, and the Lord's love for the individual soul which is represented. Such allegorical meanings are quite legitimate as secondary interpretations of the meaning of the poem. As representing the love between Christ and His Church, the primary meaning of the poem is interpreted by the after-experience of Christians in the same way in which the primary meaning of many prophecies, especially Messianic prophecies, is interpreted by the later facts of the Christian Revelation.

The very high estimate of the book by the Christian Church came to it from the Jews, for as early as the first century A.D. R. Akiba says, 'for all the writings are holy, but the Song of Songs is a "Holy of Holies."' There is little doubt that in the admission of the Song of Songs to the Jewish Canon influence was exercised by the scribes, who found in this poem an allegory of the love that existed between God and Israel. Thus the allegorical interpretation has very old and strong support. Moreover, the reading of this book on the eighth day of the feast of the Passover, the feast which commemorated Jehovah's deliverance of His people from a strange lord and master in order to unite them to Himself, points to the fact of the general Jewish acceptance of the allegorical interpretation of Jehovah as the Beloved, and His people as His loved one.

According to the paraphrase of the Targum, the history of Israel is represented from the Exodus to its redemption in Messianic times, when the final union of God and His people will be realised. A later Jewish view is very beautiful. It regarded heaven as the union of man with God, and death as the kiss of God which seals that union. It held that the Song of Songs was the highest expression of that union.

The poetry of the Song of Songs is exceedingly beautiful. The

author's eye is penetrating and sympathetic. He knows his eastern land well. He was evidently well acquainted with the many places alluded to: with Kedar, Engedi, Sharon; the hills of Gilead, Hermon, Mahanaim, Carmel; with northern Palestine, and especially with the neighbourhood of Lebanon, which is mentioned repeatedly. His feeling for nature is singularly spontaneous and warm, and his joy in the beauty of nature brings vividly before us scene after scene of his experiences in northern Palestine, and especially in Gilead, east of Jordan.

As we read his poetry, instinct with the magic of the East, living and breathing pictures shape themselves before our eyes. We see the doves in the clefts of the rocks, or beside the water brooks; we see the gazelles upon the mountains or feeding among the lilies; we see the goats on the hills of Gilead. We walk with the shepherd lover as he invites his love, in the words of the poet (Song of Songs ii. 10-13): 'Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.'

There are beautiful descriptions of gardens in this poem, such as this in which the poet makes his shepherd lover compare the beauty of his betrothed to a garden in the borders of Lebanon. Chapter iv. verses 12-15: 'A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphire, with spikenard, spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices: a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon.'

This passage, as well as others in the Song of Songs, has been freely used by Tennyson in the lyrics of *Maud*. Without this great poem, even if it were only interpreted in its primary sense, the Bible would be distinctly the poorer. The writer of the Song of Songs sets forth in concrete form one important aspect of that central and essential doctrine of the Bible—St. John's doctrine—1 John iv. 7, 8: 'Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love.'

CHAPTER XIII.

ISAIAH.

OF the private life of Isaiah, the greatest of the prophets, we know but little. The public life we have already considered to some extent in our remarks on the Second Book of Kings. We know from the sixth chapter of the book which bears his name that he was called upon to be a prophet in the last year of the reign of King Uzziah, *i.e.*, 740 B. C. He prophesied during the reigns of the next three kings—Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. He was a married man, and he was inspired to give names to his two sons which made them living memorials of his teachings. The first was called Maher-Shalal-hash-baz (*i.e.*, spoil-speed-booty-haste), a reference to the Assyrian invasion. The other son was called Shear-jashub (*i.e.*, remnant shall return), a reference to the central point of his vision of a brighter future when the remnant of the nation shall return to Jehovah. This symbolical naming of his sons reminds us of a characteristic of Isaiah, that while his prophecies are perhaps the loftiest and the most far-reaching in the Old Testament, they are also most closely connected with the actual life of his time. His mission from God was to the whole nation, and in order to influence the nation he aimed at the nobility in general, and the king in particular. So close was his relation with the court in the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah that it has been supposed that he was of noble family, and the contents of his book point to a man who had had the highest education of his time. As a statesman as well as a prophet he tried to guide the foreign policy of Judah, especially during the two critical periods of the nation's life—in the time of the attack by the confederate kings, Pekah, king of Israel, and Rezin, king of Syria, mentioned in chapters vii. and viii.; and in the invasion by Assyria, mentioned in chapters xxxvi. and xxxvii.

In the first crisis he found that King Ahaz refused his advice, and insisted on relying on Assyria instead of Jehovah. In the second crisis he succeeded in encouraging Hezekiah to resist Sennacherib's summons to surrender. The deliverance which Isaiah promised in the name of the Lord contrary to all probabilities, actually took place. The Angel of the Lord smote in the camp of the Assyrians before Jerusalem 185,000 men, probably by a Divine visitation of pestilence, perhaps of cholera, and thus forced Sennacherib

to raise the siege and retire to Assyria. With this great visible confirmation by God of the source of Isaiah's message, the public career of Isaiah ends, and we hear nothing more about him, though a tradition assigns to him a martyr's death in the reign of Manasseh.

An event of far-reaching influence—the expansion of the great Assyrian empire—conditioned the whole of his ministry. When Isaiah received his call to be a prophet and commenced his ministry, the long reign of Uzziah (about fifty years) was drawing to a close. Both the northern kingdom and the kingdom of Judah, that of Uzziah, had attained a high level of prosperity and wealth. In the northern kingdom, another long reign, that of Jeroboam II., had extended the limits of the empire to the limits of David's kingdom, while Judah, when Isaiah began his ministry in 740 B.C., had reached a very high level of military power, as well as of wealth.

Isaiah ii. verse 7: 'Their land also is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures; their land is also full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots.' But this great growth of territory and wealth in Israel and in Judah was followed by changes against which Isaiah and other prophets continually raised their voices. The rich nobles got rid of the old peasant proprietors, who had been the backbone of the nation, in order to form great estates; and the peasants, thus got rid of, became a new class of lawless and destitute men. The eviction of peasants was carried out by the corruption of justice, and great landowners not only took the place of peasant proprietors, but did so by means of the grossest abuses of the forms of justice.

Isaiah v. verse 8: 'Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth!' Micah ii. verses 2 and 9: 'And they covet fields, and take them by violence; and houses, and take them away: so they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage. . . . The women of my people have ye cast out from their pleasant houses; from their children have ye taken away my glory for ever.'

Moreover, the nobility with the growth of wealth developed luxury and immorality, the women as well as the men of the upper classes incurring the severest denunciations of the prophet, which may be found in such a passage as Isaiah iii. verses 16-23: 'Moreover the Lord saith, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet: therefore the Lord will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the Lord will discover their secret parts.

In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of their tinkling ornaments about their feet, and their cauls, and their round tires like the moon, the chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers, the bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs, and the headbands, and the tablets, and the earrings, the rings, and nose jewels, the changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the wimples, and the crisping pins, the glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the vails.'

The habits of the men are denounced with equal severity in Isaiah ii. verses 12 and 22: 'For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low. . . . Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?' And the drunkards of the northern kingdom, among whom are the prophets and priests, are scourged with no less vigour in chapter xxviii. verses 1-8: 'Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower, which are on the head of the fat valleys of them that are overcome with wine! Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one, which as a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand. The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim, shall be trodden under feet: and the glorious beauty, which is on the head of the fat valley, shall be a fading flower, and as the hasty fruit (R.V. first ripe fig) before the summer; which when he that looketh upon it seeth, while it is yet in his hand he eateth it up. In that day shall the Lord of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people, and for a spirit of judgment to him that sitteth in judgment, and for strength to them that turn the battle to the gate. But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment. For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean.'

The signs of national decay were to the prophet's eyes foreshadowings and warnings of the coming of a terrible day of divine judgment. But in Jerusalem, as well as in Samaria, the kings and their courts lived in fancied security, trusting in their wealth and prosperity, and shutting their eyes to the dark storm-cloud of the Assyrian empire gathering in the north-east. Such was the very similar condition both of Judah and Israel at the time when Isaiah came on the scene as a prophet.

Probably the great earthquake, which took place in the reign of

King Uzziah, and is referred to in the book of Amos (chapter i. verse 1): 'The words of Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake;' and in Zechariah xiv. verse 5: 'And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah'), impressed Isaiah's mind, and suggested the picture of a great day of the Lord, in chapter ii. verse 20: 'In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats; to go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.'

When Isaiah appeared on the scene, Amos had already, two years before the earthquake, uttered his terrible denunciation of Israel at the great Temple of Bethel, and, as Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, said to King Jeroboam, 'the land is not yet able to bear all his words' (Amos vii. verse 10).

Hosea had continued the work of Amos in the northern kingdom almost up to the time of Isaiah's appearance in Judah. We can better understand Isaiah's account of the Vision of God at his call, when we remember that the great King Uzziah, who had done so much for Judah in his long and successful reign, was just dead, or at the point of death; and this vision was the vision of the true King of Israel, Jehovah, who remained though the earthly king was gone, and whose spokesman Isaiah was called upon to be.

The call of Isaiah, which is magnificently described in the sixth chapter, was evidently to Isaiah the great event of his life. The vision represented in concrete form a great spiritual experience, and the prophet became conscious of being called by an All-holy, majestic, and terrible God to give all his life to be His messenger to Israel.

Isaiah vi. verses 1-8: 'In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of un-

clean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims (personifications of the lightning) unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.'

The startling warning of the punishment that would fall upon the nation for its sin did not exclude the hope that 'the holy seed' should remain undestroyed; *i.e.*, that a remnant of the nation should survive the judgment. The word of Jehovah to Isaiah at his call contained the essentials of the message he had to bear; the prediction of a terrible judgment, always including hopes of restoration for the remnant, the few that still listened to Jehovah.

The Book of Isaiah after the first prefatory verse begins with the great arraignment, which the prophet utters as spokesman for the Lord. It is an arraignment of God's unnatural children for ingratitude and unfaithfulness towards their Father. Isaiah i. verses 2, 3: 'Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.'

And the defence that the services of the Temple were carried out with great lavishness and pomp is indignantly swept away by the prophet. Isaiah i. verses 13-18: 'Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.'

This stern condemnation of mere external religion as a substitute for hearts and lives turned to the Lord is a characteristic of Isaiah's teaching, and, like all his teaching, not without its message for us

at the present day. It is not that external religion is condemned, but to make it of any value it must be the expression of hearts and lives devoted to God and to His service, which is the service of our fellow-men. Religious experience is, in its essence, the same at all times the whole world over. As we read the prophet's utterances we turn towards God, as the remnant did when they first heard it at Jerusalem. Isaiah's denunciation of national sin, and national unfaithfulness to God, though strong and repeated, is not the main thing in his book. The main thing is the wonderful vision of the future, the vision of the Messianic King and the Messianic Kingdom. As we read his prophecies the future takes shape before our eyes, and gradually, as we study them, becomes well defined and clear; just as when travelling we catch sight of what seems a faint bank of clouds on the horizon, which, as we approach nearer, we discover to be the solid reality of a great mountain range. Here let us look at the picture of the great prophet Isaiah. The tablet in his hand has Salvatore written on it in large letters.

We now come to the beautiful parable of the vineyard, addressed to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the men of Judah. The prophet tells to his countrymen a simple story of the experiment of a friend of his ('my wellbeloved') with his vineyard, and asks for a verdict. His countrymen assent to their own condemnation before they see that the parable is pointed against themselves. At last the prophet throws off all disguise and explains the true meaning of his parable. Here is the parable beginning (Isaiah v. verses 1-7): 'Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard.' (Literally translated: 'I would sing of my friend, my friend's song about his vineyard.') 'My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill; and he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower (watch-tower) in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard; I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: and I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of

Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.'

Now we pass to a celebrated passage which describes the sign given by the Lord through the prophet to King Ahaz, who refused to ask a sign because he had no intention of giving up his plan of throwing himself into the arms of Assyria, which Isaiah was doing his utmost to prevent. On King Ahaz's refusal the prophet said, 'Hear ye now, O house of David; Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know how to refuse the evil, and choose the good. For before the child shall know how to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings' (Isaiah vii. verses 13-16). This passage naturally brings us to the consideration of the most important part of Isaiah's prophecies, the prophecies concerning the Messiah and the Messiah's Kingdom. These Messianic prophecies point to the glorious future when Messiah shall reign—the Golden Age when the highest ideals of humanity shall be realised through a Divine Person, and the kingdom He shall establish in the hearts and lives of men. Of course the later and fuller meaning which the light of the Incarnation has shed upon this passage in Isaiah vii. need not blind us to the original meaning of the sign, the meaning which it would convey to King Ahaz and to Isaiah's other contemporaries, a meaning which may be summarised as a promise of speedy deliverance from the threatened invasion of Judah by the confederate kings, Rezin and Pekah. All the allusions in the passage, convey primarily this original meaning.

The first of the Messianic visions we shall take is that found in chapter ix. which comes like sunrise in the darkness and desolation of a foreign invasion. It begins with a burst of rapturous joy: 'The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy; they joy before thee according to the joy in the harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian. For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, The

mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment, and with justice, from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this' (Isaiah ix. verses 2-7). Though the translation might be altered in places, yet as greater accuracy makes no important change in the sense, this powerful prophecy of our Lord's coming may be left as it stands in the majestic march of the familiar words of the A.V.

Next in the order of the Book of Isaiah comes this prophecy of the Advent of the Messiah and the establishment of His Kingdom. Isaiah xi. verses 1-9: 'And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of fear of the Lord; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the suckling child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' (viper's) den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.'

This is the prophecy of the Golden Age brought in by the coming of the Messiah. Out of the decayed stem of the family of David the Messianic King was to arise. The idea of a personal Messiah, which was one of the central ideas of Isaiah's prophecies, is specially prominent in this passage. The Spirit of the Lord gives to the Messiah the qualities of a perfect Ruler, which are enumerated. The Messiah has not only the fullest equipment of religion Himself, but delights to recognise the possession of it in others. The special objects of His protection are the poor and down-trodden classes, for the 'meek of the earth' might be translated 'the oppressed in the land.' The remarkable point in this

prophecy is that the Golden Age is seen as belonging not only to men, but to animals. It is the first vision of that Universal Kingdom of Love on the earth in which the Messiah Himself when He came declared 'not one sparrow falleth to the ground without my Father.'

There is a faint echo of this wonderful prophecy in the melodious verse of Virgil (*Eclogues* iv. and v.), also in the Sibylline Oracles, and those who know their New Testament will remember the great passage in *Romans* viii. verses 19-22: 'For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.'

St. Paul's vision of the restoration of human society extends to the relations of man to the animal world. On this particular point the establishment in the Messianic Kingdom of peace between man and his humbler fellow-creatures there is no pronouncement of equal value in the whole of the Old Testament. Peace between man and man is a characteristic of that Kingdom, and also peace between man and lower animal.

We come next to the great prediction of the Righteous Reign of the Messianic King. Chapter xxxii. verses 1-8: 'Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment. And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of waters in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim, and the ears of them that hear shall hearken. The heart also of the rash shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly. The vile person shall be no more called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful. For the vile person will speak villany, and his heart will work iniquity, to practise hypocrisy, and to utter error against the Lord, to make empty the soul of the hungry, and he will cause the drink of the thirsty to fail. The instruments also of the churl are evil: he deviseth wicked devices to destroy the poor with lying words, even when the needy speaketh right. But the liberal deviseth liberal things; and by liberal things shall he stand.'

This vision of the Messianic Kingdom shows us a perfectly righteous government, where not only the King, but the nobility also shall do their duty, for each one of them shall be as a 'hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest,' and thus an aris-

ocracy of character shall supersede an aristocracy of birth. The true nobleman is contrasted with the churl, or rather, as the word means, 'knave,' and true nobility is the distinguishing mark of each member of the Kingdom. The prophecy of chapter xxxiii. verse 17, is also clearly Messianic, and begins very beautifully: 'Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty, they shall behold the land that is very far off,' *i.e.*, wide dominions of the Messiah (R.V., a far-stretching land).

The last chapters of the Book of Isaiah (40-66) now claim our attention. They contain some of the most truly inspired passages in this book. The later authorship is now generally accepted by Biblical scholars. Be that as it may, the writer is one in no degree inferior in spiritual vision and inspiration to the writer of the preceding chapters. We know for certain, that whatever the exact date of these prophecies (they were apparently written between the advent of Cyrus and the fall of Babylon), they are the work of the highest spiritual inspiration, and quite worthy of their place as the second part of this beautiful book of prophecy. The fine Prologue is a fitting introduction to the wonderful collection of prophecies that follows.

Isaiah xl. verses 1-11: 'Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins. The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever. O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O 'Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work (R.V. recompense) before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with

his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young' (R.V. give suck).

This picture of the Good Shepherd represents the care with which the homeward journey of the Exiles was to be shepherded by the Lord. This is perhaps the earliest use made in the Bible of this image of the Good Shepherd—an image which is used also by Ezekiel, and in the New Testament is freely and still more beautifully used by the Lord Jesus. The Messianic element in these later chapters of the Book of Isaiah which we are now considering has its distinctive features. The first and chief of these is the picture of the ideal servant of Jehovah, which is repeated with various modifications four times. In some passages Israel is the servant of God, but this meaning is not sufficient in others. But the ideal servant, representing an ideal Israel, existed for the writer of the prophecy as one whom he perceived in the far future, and who was not realised in actual life till the coming of our Lord. The first of these passages is found in the forty-second chapter of Isaiah, verses 1-4; 'Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.'

The servant in this case is clearly not the actual Israel, and only in some sense the ideal Israel, but the meaning is fully satisfied by the final application of the prophecy to Christ. The ideal servant is also spoken of in chapter xlix. verses 1-6. This passage deals with the call and preparation of the servant of Jehovah by his Lord, and the meaning is more clearly satisfied by taking it to be a picture of the ideal Israel than in the case of the former passage. In chapter lii. verse 13, we enter on the last and most wonderful of the pictures of the servant of Jehovah.

In the former passages the Servant has been described as carrying out a mission resolutely and confidently as a prophet of God. In this passage the Servant appears in a new and marvellous aspect, as the Man of Sorrows, the bearer of the sins of the transgressors. The details of the picture are so minutely accurate as to make this the most wonderful prophecy in the Old Testament, a literal prediction of the Passion and Death of the Suffering Messiah. The contrast between the undeserved abasement and the unexpected

exaltation of the Self-sacrificing Servant of Jehovah is pressed to the uttermost in this picture, and has been, with the most marvellous perfection, fulfilled in the Trial, the Suffering, and the Death of the Lord Jesus the true Messiah.

Isaiah lii. verse 13, and liii.: 'Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: so shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider. Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment and who shall declare his generation?' (R.V. 'And as for his generation, who among them considered it?') 'For he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made (R.V. they made) his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.'

The great mystery of the efficacy of vicarious suffering is a prominent part of the picture. The special point of this great sacrifice is that it is voluntary. The Servant Himself, innocent of sin, suffers for sinners and does so willingly, in order to deliver them from the power of sin. The fifty-fourth chapter is a continuation of the prophecies of consolation which began in chapter xlix. Its subject is the happiness of Zion in the future, when united to God by an everlasting covenant.

The fifty-fifth chapter is an invitation to individuals to come and take the salvation freely offered. The tenderness of this gracious invitation has been rarely equalled elsewhere even in the Bible. It begins: 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people. Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee, because of the Lord thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee. Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.'

The sixty-first chapter begins with the words on which our Lord preached His first sermon in the synagogue at Nazareth. Isaiah lxi, verses 1, 2: 'The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God.' Our Lord quoted this passage as a prediction of Himself and His message, and it is noticeable that He stopped in the middle of the sentence, omitting the last eight words of our quotation.'

A word as to the value of the Prophet's teaching regarding our

daily life. What is best in His teaching is of eternal importance, and is as well fitted to guide us in the twentieth century in England as it was to guide the people of Palestine thousands of years ago. Our outer life is different to theirs, but our inner life is the same. Isaiah's teaching is as helpful to direct us in the reiterated daily choice between good and evil, which forms character, as it was when it was first given. He tells us, for instance, of our Heavenly Father's remonstrance with His unnatural children, to whom the Prophet was sent: 'I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.'

The natural thing is for children to return their parents' love, and to show their gratitude for their parents' care by lives of willing obedience. Dutiful children—*i.e.*, children who feel and do their duty—will be anxious to cause no pain to their parents through any fault of theirs, and all this is doubly true in the case of the Heavenly Father of us all. He gives love and care to His little children, and also to His grown-up children. We agree with Isaiah for blaming the Israelites for not making a proper response. They forgot their duty to their Heavenly Father, and a great deal of the Book of Isaiah consists of blame for this wrong-doing, and warnings against it. When we read them we must apply them to ourselves, and see to it that we are not as guilty as the Israelites, or rather, more guilty, for we have far greater privileges, and, when we fail in love and obedience to our Heavenly Father, are sinning against far greater light—the Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

Again, when the Prophet says, 'The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider,' we must apply the words to ourselves, and examine ourselves and see whether we, who are God's people, as Israel was, are like Israel, forgetful and thankless. The animals are just as much an example to us to-day as they were then. They know their master and their master's house. They know the place they live in, and that the food that is put in their manger is supplied by him. Do we always do so as much as they? Our Heavenly Father pleads with us as He did with the Israelites in Isaiah's day: 'Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well.' This is still a message to us from God, full of wise teaching and tender solicitude and pity for His erring children. God desires now as He did then to draw His sinful children away from their sins into closest communion with Himself.

God's tender pity for His rebellious children, declared so mov-

ingly by His Prophet Isaiah for His children at Jerusalem, was expressed hundreds of years afterwards still more movingly by One far greater than Isaiah. Matthew xxiii. verse 37: 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!'

Can anything in the world be of greater encouragement and comfort than to know from Isaiah, and still more perfectly from our Lord, that God regards even His black sheep as His sheep still; seeks to bring them back to His flock, keeps a place for them in His fold, and considers no pain and trouble that the Shepherd can bestow too great to employ in rescuing one single lost sheep. The compassionate seeking of the Good Shepherd for the lost sheep, the welcome of the loving Father for the Prodigal, is the strongest means for drawing rebellious souls back to their God, to receive the forgiveness and deliverance from the power of sin which He is longing to bestow.

CHAPTER XIV.

JEREMIAH—LAMENTATIONS.

THE Book of the Prophet Jeremiah begins: 'The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin: to whom the word of the Lord came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month' (Jeremiah i. verses 1-3).

The chief scene of his ministry was at Jerusalem. He was born of a priestly family at Anathoth, not far from Jerusalem, and his ministry continued under five different kings—Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah. He first appeared in the fifteenth year of Josiah's reign, 625 B. C., five years before the year in which the Book of the Law was found by Hilkiah in the Temple. This was the great event which influenced all Jeremiah's teaching. The Book of the Law, it will be remembered we said in our sketch of the history of its discovery, was most probably the Book of Deuteronomy, for it was read at a single assembly in the house of the Lord, and this could not have been the case with so long a work as the whole Pentateuch, which Ezra took days to read (2 Kings xxiii. verse 2). The reading of this book made a deep and lasting impression on Jeremiah. His prophecies are full of quotations from it, and the great sin of idolatry which he denounces so powerfully is the object of the severest condemnation in this Book of Deuteronomy.

It will be remembered that Josiah and his people had entered in the most solemn way into a public engagement to keep God's Commandments, and this covenant had been made after Josiah had gone up to the house of the Lord and read in the ears of all the people the words of the book which had been found there. A great reform had followed, in which the king, at any rate, was thoroughly in earnest. It was before this reform, while the land was sunk in the godlessness, idolatry, and wickedness which King Manasseh had fostered, that Jeremiah received his call to be a prophet of the

Lord. Hezekiah, it will be remembered, had carried out a great religious reform under the influence of Isaiah; but Manasseh had made the condition of Judah and Jerusalem worse than they had been before. In particular, he had led the nation into the grossest idolatry. He had set up a graven image of the grove that he had made in the house of the Lord. He had made his son pass through the fire to Molech. He had set up altars for all the host of heaven in the courts of the house of the Lord. Josiah, the son of Manasseh's son Amon, carried out, as we have seen, a vigorous reformation, but it is quite evident from the prophecies of Jeremiah, that the reformation was chiefly external; successful enough against the visible symbols of idolatry, it left the people still completely demoralised, to judge from the pictures of their condition which are found in Jeremiah's prophecies. The reformation of life and morals needed to satisfy God's laws, and to rescue the nation from destruction, did not take place. The nation continued on the broad and easy way that leads to national disaster.

From Jeremiah's call, as described by himself in the first chapter, we learn that in his great humility he was, like Moses, very unwilling to accept it. Jeremiah i. verses 6-10: 'Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child. But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord. Then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth. See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.'

The long prophecy beginning in chapter ii. and ending with chapter vi. was probably given in the reign of Josiah. 'The Lord said also unto me in the days of Josiah the king' (Jeremiah iii. verse 6). The immorality and idolatry of Israel and Judah are the subject of this prophecy, and they are treated under the figure of the faithfulness of two bad wives to their good husband. The judgment had already fallen on Israel, and was to come soon to wicked and rebellious Judah, for not only were the people guilty, but also the prophets and the priests. We learn from chapter vii. how Jeremiah prophesied, at any rate on that occasion. He was told to stand in the Gate of the Lord's house, and proclaim this word: 'Hear the word of the Lord, all ye of Judah' (verse 2), and then follows a long prophecy delivered in the Gate of the Temple. The first object of this address was to awaken the people

from their false security. The Holy City, and even the Temple itself, could not save those that forgot the true God and worshipped false gods.

Speaking for God, the prophet declares that the keeping of the ceremonial law came after, and was of lesser importance than the keeping of the moral law. He warns them of punishment for all their wrongdoing; as they sin, so they shall suffer. God will not spare Zion now any more than He spared Shiloh in the past. The Temple of Jerusalem is no safer than the Temple was at Shiloh, if the people go on in idolatry and wickedness. Mingled with the many predictions of woe for Jerusalem were tender lamentations, for Jeremiah's was a deeply emotional nature, and the ruin which he saw coming upon his nation filled him with grief. In chapter xi. verses 1-8, we have a passage which alludes to the finding of the Book of the Law in the reign of Josiah, and uses in the third verse the language of Deuteronomy, chapter xxvii. verse 26. This passage tells us in verse 6: 'Then the Lord said unto me, Proclaim all these words in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, saying, Hear ye the words of this covenant, and do them.' The meaning of this was that Jeremiah was ordered to travel through the cities of Judah, as well as the streets of Jerusalem, in order to set forth the teaching of Deuteronomy, and to urge men to put it into practice.

This passage gives us an interesting glimpse into Jeremiah's activities. Another interesting glimpse into Jeremiah's life shows the difficulties which beset his steps, even at this period of his ministry. After the lessons from the Potter, which we find in chapter xviii., showing God's absolute power over the nations, Jeremiah was commanded to take a potter's earthen vessel and break it in the valley of Hinnom, by this symbolic act showing the judgment which was to fall on Judah and Jerusalem. After he had repeated in the Temple the substance of the prophecy, Pashur, the son of Immer the priest, who was chief governor of the Temple, smote him and put him in the stocks until the next day; whereupon the prophet, immediately after his release, pronounced the Lord's formal sentence of destruction on Jerusalem, that all its inhabitants should be taken away captive by the king of Babylon, and that Pashur and all his friends should die and be buried in Babylon.

We know more from the thirty-sixth chapter concerning the way in which the prophecies of Jeremiah took a written form than we do concerning the book of any other prophet. By the command of God, Jeremiah, in the fourth year of King Jehoiakim, was ordered to write upon a roll of a book the words which God

had spoken 'against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations' (verse 2). Jeremiah dictated the prophecies to his attendant, Baruch, who wrote them down from his mouth. He sent Baruch to the House of the Lord upon the fasting day, to read the words that he had written. Baruch read the roll of the prophecies 'in the higher court, at the entry of the new gate of the Lord's house, in the ears of all the people' (Jeremiah xxxvi. 10). This was in the ninth month, *i.e.*, December, of the next year following the beginning of the writing.

King Jehoiakim, hearing from his princes what Baruch had been doing, ordered the roll to be brought to him. It was read to the king and his princes in the winter-house. After three or four leaves had been read, the king cut the roll with his penknife, and cast it into the charcoal fire in the brazier. After the burning of the roll, Jeremiah was ordered to write another roll. Jeremiah xxxvi. verse 29: 'And thou shalt say to Jehoiakim king of Judah, Thus said the Lord; Thou hast burned this roll, saying, Why hast thou written therein, saying, The king of Babylon shall certainly come and destroy this land, and shall cause to cease from thence man and beast? Therefore thus saith the Lord of Jehoiakim king of Judah; He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David: and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost. And I will punish him and his seed and his servants for their iniquity; and I will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and upon the men of Judah, all the evil that I have pronounced against them; but they hearkened not. Then took Jeremiah another roll, and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah; who wrote therein from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire: and there were added besides unto them many like words.'

The message of the Lord, that the king of Babylon was to come and destroy the land of Judah, brings us to the chief external fact which influenced the ministry, and cast its shadow across the pages of the prophet. That fact was the growth of the Babylon into the great world-power in Western Asia. What Nineveh had been in the days of Isaiah, Babylon was in the days of Jeremiah. Just as Isaiah had had to fight against an Egyptian party at Jerusalem, which sought to enlist the help of Egypt against Assyria, so Jeremiah had to use all his powers to oppose the intrigues of a similar party, who wished for vassalage under the Egyptian king rather than a tributary position under the Chaldæans.

It was in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, the same year in which

Jeremiah dictated the roll to Baruch, that Nebuchadnezzar completely broke the Egyptian power by his victory over Pharaoh Necho at Carchemish. Jeremiah at once perceived the whole significance of the battle, as his ode of rejoicing (forty-sixth chapter) to greet the king of Babylon plainly shows. From this time on Jeremiah began to teach that safety for Jerusalem lay in accepting the overlordship of Babylon. The intrigues first of one king and then of another, to obtain assistance from Egypt against Babylon, led directly to the first captivity in the reign of Jehoiachin.

The last king of Judah, Zedekiah, was appointed by Nebuchadnezzar, and took a solemn oath of allegiance to the Babylonian king. In the ninth year of his reign, however, Zedekiah, too weak to resist the pressure of the Jewish princes who advocated resistance against Babylon, entangled himself in a treasonable alliance with the king of Egypt, and this was followed by the second siege of Jerusalem. During this siege, Jeremiah exerted himself to urge submission to the Chaldeans, and provoked the bitterest persecution at the hands of the princes of Judah, who had brought about the alliance with Egypt. In the thirty-seventh and thirty-eighth chapters of his book we have a vivid account by himself of how he was arrested when going out into the land of Benjamin, and imprisoned in the house of Jonathan the scribe, which had been made the common prison; how he was released by King Zedekiah, and afterwards cast into prison again by the princes, who this time let down Jeremiah with cords into a deep cistern, where he sunk in the mire; how he was rescued by Ebed-Melech the Ethiopian, one of the king's eunuchs, who by the directions of the king took thirty men and drew up Jeremiah with cords out of the cistern. After the capture of Jerusalem, Jeremiah was very well treated by the Chaldeans, and allowed to take his choice of living in Babylon or remaining in Jerusalem. He chose to remain, but was carried away captive into Egypt by a body of Jews, who had revolted against the rule of Babylon.

Of Jeremiah's prophecies it may be said that, though full of the announcement of woes against the wrong-doers, they do not forget Isaiah's doctrine of the remnant. Jeremiah xxiii. 1-4: 'Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the Lord. Therefore thus saith the Lord God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the Lord. And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be

fruitful and increase. And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the Lord.'

Nor do these prophecies altogether omit the comforting thought of the coming of the Messiah, of which the following is perhaps the clearest example. Chapter xxiii. 15-18: 'Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS**. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that they shall no more say, The Lord liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but, The Lord liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land.'

But undoubtedly the highest point in Jeremiah's inspiration is to be found in the prophecy of the New Covenant, which in depth of spiritual intuition surpasses not only his other conceptions, but all those of the other prophets. Chapter xxxi. 31-34: 'Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.'

The intensely emotional nature of Jeremiah is accountable for his prevailing melancholy, even more than the very trying circumstances in which his lot was cast. He frequently breaks into complaints and lamentations, and although he tries repeatedly to induce his countrymen to repent of their sins and turn to their God, there is often a note of despair in his prophecies, as of one who is only too certain that his country must soon meet its doom. Jeremiah's other characteristics are spirituality, truthfulness, self-sacrifice, and fearlessness. With unceasing fortitude, he spent his life battling

against odds which would have filled another with despair. He fought a losing battle with unshaken resolution, and his character was disciplined by defeat into the likeness of the loftiest humanity.

To-day we are still able to listen to and benefit by his teaching and advice. That which took place in Jeremiah's lifetime still takes place in ours to-day, no doubt under somewhat altered conditions. People still persist in evil-doing. Finding fault with others, for instance, is a poor business. What we have to try to learn, whether from seeing good or bad around us, is to steer clear of evil ourselves, and learn to do good. Here is an opportunity given us to ask ourselves how you and I are spending our lives. Let us hope that they may be lived to good purpose, through God's grace and mercy.

Jeremiah was a great prophet, a great religious thinker, and a great servant of God. We are not great as he was, but God has little servants as well as great ones, and we are God's servants too. We can all remember the names of many people who have done great things: for instance, General Gordon, who fought and died for his country and his God; and Nelson, who said that England expects every man to do his duty, and died doing his. Or, again of Shakespeare, Milton, Dante, Goethe, who delight the generations as they come and go; of men like Schumann or Beethoven, who seem to have listened to the strains of Heaven's music and brought these down to earth; of artists like Giotto, Botticelli, Donatello, who stand out like stars in the firmament of the ages. Numbers of such great men come and go with their centuries, and leave deep impressions on the sands of time, helping upwards the life of mankind by their work, by their goodness, by their pureness.

We would all like to be amongst those who excel; but this is not possible. Not all of us are destined to attain to greatness and distinction; but all of us are meant to aim at goodness in our own allotted places. Each one of us has, individually, received God's call to fill that position honourably in which it has pleased God to put us. We have no excuse at all. This much is expected of us. Nothing less is acceptable to God. We have all been children: we have had a nursery, a schoolroom, a university, and we pass into life, and are member of a society. There are some of us who are called upon to work with our brains. There are others amongst us called upon to work with all our hearts. Again, others are called upon to work with their hands: some work indoors, some work out-of-doors. Nobody has a minute to lose. Recall here that important advertisement. 'Lost! Lost, between sunrise and sunset, one golden hour set with sixty diamond minutes. No reward will be given, because it is lost for ever.' Nobody

should speak lightly of 'killing' time, which is a kind of gradual self-murder. We know not the meaning of life if we can talk of time, precious time given to us to make use of profitably, and can lightly or cynically speak of 'killing' it. No opportunity wasted is ever given us a second time. No regret, no tears, no reproach, have the power to bring back a minute over again. Now, from our own lives and our little conversation which we have had together, we will return to our Bible.

The secret of Jeremiah's strength was his child-like trust in God. Jeremiah regarded himself as a little child in the hands of God. He had a very humble opinion of himself. He replied to God when he was called to be a prophet, 'Ah, Lord God, behold, I cannot speak; for I am a child.' We have heard much the same words uttered by King Solomon; you may remember them. We see how both these great men did not rely on their own strength, but how both relied on and asked for the help of God, Who can make the weakest strong for good. Pray to be made strong for good.

Jeremiah had small ground for hope, with his countrymen around him, turning a deaf ear to his warnings and entreaties, and unable, in their fancied security, to perceive what seemed near at hand to one who lived half his life in the future: the shock of the Chaldæans' attack, the fall of God's city and of God's house before Nebuchadnezzar's armies. Yet hope was always with him—what though the present was dark, and the future darker—a sad half hopeless Hope, like the 'Hope' we know so well in Watts' great picture, that forlorn figure in space, seated on the earth-ball, with eyes bandaged, dejectedly hanging down her head, playing on the single string left to her instrument, still clinging to her hold; not giving up, still, in spite of all difficulties, trusting in the Lord's goodness, who alone works all things well, and can turn evil into good. The Lord is ever willing to forgive, so long as we come unto Him resolved to sin no more. In Jeremiah's time, the judgment upon Israel was also a judgment upon all the other nations for their wrong-doing. Egypt, the land of the Philistines, Tyre and Sidon, and Arabia alike, were to fall by the power of God's instrument of judgment, the Chaldæan Empire.

The Book of Lamentations or Dirges is closely connected with the subject-matter of the Book of Jeremiah, with the sufferings and sorrows that came upon the people of Judah and Jerusalem, in consequence of the capture of Jerusalem by the Chaldæans in 586 B.C. In the Book of Jeremiah we read of the circumstances which led up to the capture, and of the capture itself. In the Book of Lamentations we read of the feelings of those who had seen the capture and

the destruction of the city and the Temple, and who sought to find some adequate expression for the catastrophe which oppressed them. The Lamentations are the expression of genuine and heartfelt grief, such grief as a tender-hearted man like Jeremiah could not help feeling for the misfortune of those whom, in spite of all their sins, he loved as being his countrymen. Tradition, in both the Jewish and Christian Church, ascribes this Book to Jeremiah. In the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Old Testament, of which it will be remembered the manuscripts are many centuries older than the manuscripts in Hebrew, there is a note prefixed to the first chapter: 'And it came to pass after Israel was taken captive and Jerusalem made desolate, Jeremiah sat weeping and lamented with this Lamentation over Jerusalem.' The contents of the book accord with the tradition. Chapters ii. and iv. are fresh and warm with the lifelike touches of an eye-witness.

The book is obviously in its subject-matter a supplement to the Book of Jeremiah; the differences between these two of style and treatment are accounted for by the differences of subject and purpose. Though constructed with the most careful art, these Dirges breathe the most moving pathos. They deal with a common theme, but each develops a different aspect of it; the first words of each poem indicate this. The desolation of Jerusalem is the subject of the first words of the first chapter: 'How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people!'

The subject of the second Dirge is God's judgment on His People. 'How hath the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger' The third Dirge deals with the nation's complaint and its consolation: 'I am the man, that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath.' The consolation which the latter part of this Dirge develops is based on the thought of God's compassion, and the gracious purposes of His Visitation. It ends more hopefully, with a confident appeal to God. In the fourth Dirge, the Past and Present of Zion are contrasted. It begins: 'How is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed!' The contrast between the Past and the Present is dwelt upon touchingly. In vain had the people fixed their hopes on Egypt, or on Zedekiah. The cup of humiliation shall be passed on to Edom: 'The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion' (Lamentations iv. verse 22). The fifth Dirge is an appeal to God's compassion to consider the affliction of His people and help them. The Dirge begins: 'Remember, O Lord, what is come upon us: consider, and behold our reproach.'

In all these five separate poems or dirges the writer speaks in

the name of the nation. There are apparent echoes of Ezekiel in the poems, but as Ezekiel was a contemporary of Jeremiah, and must have been his fellow-citizen at Jerusalem, before he was carried away captive with Jehoiachin to Babylon, there is nothing astonishing in this. The burden of these exquisite elegies might be expressed in the well-known line of a great English poet, 'But ah! the heavy change, now thou art gone,' though the object of their lament is, of course, a nation, and not an individual.

It is pathetic and touching that the Jews in Jerusalem at the present day have their Friday afternoon service every week, standing at the foot of the huge wall, which entirely divides and shuts out from their view the site of their temple of old. With book in hand, they recite the Lamentations, and bewail the loss of their privileges; while they still hope that a better fate may be in store for them sooner or later.

CHAPTER XV.

EZEKIEL.

THE Book of the Prophet Ezekiel is the work of a contemporary of Jeremiah, by whose writings he was evidently influenced. The early part of his life was passed at Jerusalem, where Jeremiah was then prophesying. Ezekiel was one of the priests of the Temple, and his perfect acquaintance with the ritual, as well as with the architecture of the Temple, shows that he must have carried on the duties of a priest for a considerable time. He was carried away captive to Babylon, with King Jehoiachin and the élite of the nation, in the first captivity, 597 B.C., and was placed with a colony of Jews at Tel Abib, by the river Chebar, probably a tributary of the Euphrates, or possibly one of the canals. The Jewish exiles in Babylonia were not prisoners. They lived their own life as a community, apart from their heathen neighbours, as the Jews of the Mellah, themselves originally exiles from Spain, live in a Moorish town to-day. Ezekiel was married, and lived in his own house, and the elders of the Jewish community used to come and sit with him and listen to his words. He received the call to be a prophet in the fifth year of King Jehoiachins' exile, B.C. 592, and his prophetic work lasted at any rate twenty-two years, the last date in the book being 570 B.C. From his home on the Chebar, Ezekiel watched the conduct of the king and people of Jerusalem, gradually drawing down upon themselves the avenging power of Babylon. The interest the exiles felt in Jerusalem and its fortunes was intense. They were evidently in direct communication, and knew all that was going on, and they also knew how the attitude of the king of Judah was regarded in Babylon. From the time of his call up to the Siege of Jerusalem, 587 B.C., Ezekiel prophesied the approaching destruction of the once holy city, a destruction which he ascribed chiefly to its idolatry (*cf.* chapter xvi. verses 20-23).

It may seem incredible to some of us to-day that idolatry should have continued in Israel, in spite of the efforts of the leaders of the people as far back as Moses and Elijah, and as late as Isaiah and Jeremiah. We in England have now no external idolatry of this kind. Moloch and Ashtaroth do not influence us; but what about Mammon? If Ezekiel were alive to-day he might find in our own

midst a growing, if less crude, Mammon-worship, an idolatry more subtle, but at least as destructive to the true ideals of national life as to the true ideals of personal life. How many now, in all classes of society, and especially, as it was at Jerusalem in the times of Ezekiel, in the upper classes, have no regard for the interest of the community, but live to grasp everything for themselves, making private gain their religion instead of godliness. Example filters down from the upper strata of the community to the strata beneath, and the widespread example of the practical idolatry of Mammon-worship wields a greater power of influence than can be neutralised by the most eloquent sermons. Instead of being obsolete, as some suppose, the teachings of the old prophets of Israel and Judah, if we would give our mind to realising their meanings, are full of freshness and vitality in their application to our moral life as a community to-day.

To return to the Book of Ezekiel. The contents may be divided into three sections, dealing with the following subjects: (1) The impending Fall and Destruction of Jerusalem; this includes chapters i.-xxiv. (2) The prophecies of judgment on foreign nations, against Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyre, Sidon, and Egypt; this includes chapters xxv.-xxxii. (3) A picture of the future of Israel after its restoration, the Kingdom of God, a new Temple and a new people, consisting of chapters xxxiii.-xlvi.

The news of the Siege of Jerusalem, 587 B.C., and the reception of the news of its fall at Babylon, 585 B.C., are the two chief events on which the eyes of Ezekiel are fixed. Before the Fall of Jerusalem, Ezekiel had been extremely severe on the Jewish exiles, though admitting that their corruption was far less than that of Zedekiah and the people of Jerusalem. But after the great catastrophe the prophet dealt more gently with the exiles, feeling that his ideal of a new Jerusalem had to be born again in their hearts. The religious teaching of Ezekiel, in spite of his elaboration of imagery or allegory, was eminently sane and practical. The doctrine on which he put special stress was the freedom and responsibility of each separate soul before God, and he showed in the clearest way that neither the burden of sin inherited from a man's parents, nor the sins of a man's own past, can interfere with the action of God's forgiveness and pity towards the penitent sinner.

This view is worked out with great power in chapter xviii. verses 1-4: 'The word of the Lord came unto me again, saying, What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have

occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.' Also verses 19-23: 'Yet say ye, Why? doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father? When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, and hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live. Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?'

Perhaps that part of Ezekiel's book which produced the most immediate and definite effect is the great ideal set forth in the Vision of chapters xl.-xlviii. This is a picture of the Kingdom of God in its perfect and final state, as Ezekiel was inspired to see it. It is the life of Israel redeemed which he sees in this vision, and it is not intended to tell us how Salvation is to be reached, but it is intended to show us a vision of Salvation already realised, and a people already saved.

The central idea of the vision is of God dwelling in visible glory in His Temple in the midst of His people; and the practical purpose was to show the conditions, on the part of God's people, which His Presence in their midst involved. The priestly character of the ideal of this vision of the new Israel was natural in one who, like Ezekiel, was himself a priest, and in the immediate future this ideal of life seems to have worked well. Ezekiel occupies himself chiefly with ceremonial; but it must be remembered that it is ceremonial intended to express the life and aspirations of a people already forgiven and sanctified. The new Temple, and the new Israel which arises around it, in the new Jerusalem, were first conceived and brought to birth in the mind of Ezekiel, years before the return of the first exiles, and a still longer period before the foundations of the Temple were laid, or the building carried out under the influence of the later prophets, Haggai and Zechariah.

There are a number of other visions in Ezekiel, painted with great care, but generally encumbered with detail and over-elaborated as compared with the masterly work of Isaiah. The Book of Ezekiel

begins with a vision of Jehovah to the prophet. Ezekiel i. 4 and 26-28: 'And I looked, and behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire. . . . And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it. And I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about. As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake.'

We can only conjecture what appearances in the natural world suggested to Ezekiel the intricate details of his elaborate picture. The sight of a thunder-cloud breaking out in a storm of lightning against the glory of a sunset sky, seems best to satisfy the language. The thunder-cloud was regarded as the chariot of Jehovah, as in Psalm xviii. verse 10: 'And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind.' And Psalm civ. verses 3, 4: 'Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters: who maketh the clouds his chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the wind: who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire.'

The details of the vision, the living creatures (*i.e.*, the cherubim), the wheels, the firmament, and the throne, are only symbols to suggest that which the whole vision is intended to convey—a manifestation or coming of God. God comes in His chariot of storm-cloud, and the cherubim are probably personifications of the storm-cloud, as the seraphs are of the lightning, and they are conceived as bearing up the Presence of Jehovah on their wings. See also Isaiah xix. part of verse 1: 'Behold, the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud.' Also Psalm xcix. verse 1: 'The Lord reigneth; let the people tremble: he sitteth between the cherubims; let the earth be moved.' Psalm lxxx. part of verse 1: 'Thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth.' The cherubims are thus regarded as symbols of Jehovah's presence, and for this reason Solomon set two great cherubims within the inner house (*i.e.*, the innermost sanctuary of the Temple). 1 Kings vi. verses 23-28.

The firmament above the cherubims, and the throne above the

firmament, represent the absolute supremacy of God over heaven and over all things. The wheels may possibly have been suggested as representing by their whirling the movement of the whirlwind and tempest in which God comes. The eyes of which the living creatures are full represent life and power. We shall be helped to realise the glory of the vision Ezekiel saw, if we have observed the beauty and majesty of God's sunsets, and are able to recall our impressions while we read Ezekiel's words. As Ezekiel was inspired by the sunset sky so was Raphael by the prophet's vision, and we have before us a copy of this artist's picture, from the original in the Pitti Palace at Florence. Down in the right-hand corner, in blue shade, we see Tel-abib, the town in Mesopotamia, where the Israelites were captive. Ezekiel we see represented as lifted up into the golden sky. Eagerness is depicted on his face; he is all attention to hear his Lord's voice and to receive his command. It is a small picture, but it is a real gem. It sheds its glorious rays of light and colour, a veritable revelation, right into one's innermost soul.

As an example of Ezekiel's ideas, beautiful in itself, but spoilt by being worked out in excessive detail, we may take the picture of the Foundling Child in the sixteenth chapter. It is a picture of a child cast out to die, and taken up by one who passed by and adopted and reared to womanhood, and finally married by him who had saved her. Then falling into infidelity towards her husband, and duly punished as an adulterous wife, and then forgiven by him and received again. The cast-out child is, of course, Israel; the passer-by who becomes her Saviour and protector, and finally her husband, is Jehovah. Her infidelity means her persistent idolatry: her punishment, the judgments which have been sent upon her, and her forgiveness and restoration, the forgiveness and restoration of Israel to God's favour.

The vision of the valley of dry bones is very fine in conception, and much better worked out. The symbolism of this vision teaches the great truth that God can put fresh life into the dry bones of any nation—as, for example, of the dead nation of Israel—and bring the living nation again to their own land. Ezekiel xxxvii. verses 1-14: 'The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones, and caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry. And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest. Again he said unto me, Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them,

O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: and I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the Lord. So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them. Then he said unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army. Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts. Therefore prophesy, and say unto them. Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, and shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live; and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord.'

The ideas of the Old Testament have had their influence on the New. This is especially the case with Ezekiel, and is nowhere more apparent than in the Revelation of St. John the Divine, and Ezekiel's influence is also noticeable in our Lord's parable of the Lost Sheep and in the allegory of the Good Shepherd.

CHAPTER XVI.

DANIEL.

THE Book of Daniel is divided into two distinct parts. The first six chapters, written in the third person, tell the story of Daniel. The last six chapters give an account written by himself of his visions, and are written in the first person. The book is written partly in Aramaic—that is, from the fourth verse of chapter ii., beginning with the words 'O King,' to the end of chapter vii. The rest of the book is written in Hebrew. Daniel was one of the Jewish exiles in Babylon who was taken away with other Jews by Nebuchadnezzar (the right name is Nebuchadrezzar) in the third (the date is doubtful) year of Jehoiakim. Daniel, with his companions, Hananiah, Mishaël, and Azariah—better known to us by their Chaldean names of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego—were taken away from Jerusalem to be trained, at the king's court in Babylon, in the learning of the Chaldeans, in order that they might be capable servants of the king when they were grown up.

The Prince of the Eunuchs was kindly disposed towards Daniel, who resolved that he would not defile himself by eating the strange king's meat and by drinking his wine. By his exemplary conduct he had won the affection and esteem of the Prince of the Eunuchs, and Daniel and his companions obtained consent from the steward (Melzar, A.V.), whom the Prince of the Eunuchs had set over them, to try a ten-days' experiment of a diet of pulse and water. The experiment was a complete success. The four Jews obtained leave for the future to eat pulse or herbs and drink water. The effect of being teetotalers and vegetarians for God was that these boys grew up with good looks, strong bodies, and clear and fine minds—an example to the children of our day, who can make the same choice with the same results. These exiles attained much learning and much wisdom, and Daniel had rare understanding in interpreting all visions and dreams. The king, Nebuchadnezzar, had them all four brought into his presence, and he communed with them, and there was none found like unto them. The king had them examined, and in all learning the king found them ten times better than any of his own magicians and astrologers.

Nebuchadnezzar had a dream which troubled him. To find again a fugitive dream for the man who had dreamed it and forgotten

it was a desperate quest. The king's wise men were set the impossible task of telling him what the dream was that he had forgotten. They asked the king to tell them the dream and they would give the interpretation. The king said he had forgotten the dream: 'The thing is gone from me;' but he required, nevertheless, that they should find the dream and show it him, on pain, if they failed to do so, of immediate death. They told him that what he asked was beyond the power of man. No magician or astrologer could do this; no one could do it 'except the gods whose dwelling is not with flesh.' The king waxed wrath. A decree went forth that all the wise men of Babylon were to be slain. Daniel, with his three friends, was included amongst the number. 'And they sought Daniel and his fellows to be slain.' They met together, and Daniel desired of the king that he would give him time, and he would show the king the meaning and the interpretation. The Lord granted the prayer of Daniel and his three companions. The secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision, and Daniel blessed and thanked and praised God. 'And he (God) changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: he revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him' (Daniel ii. verses 21, 22).

Thus Daniel prayed and thanked the Lord God of his fathers. Strengthened by prayer, he went to the king. Daniel explained that he took no credit to himself for knowing more than the other wise men of Babylon. He pointed out that he was but an instrument of God, chosen to work for Him; that the Lord had merely made him His mouthpiece. Daniel then went on to discover the lost dream, which was the difficult thing: to interpret it when discovered being comparatively easy. By this wonderful revealing of that secret thing, the lost dream, the heathen king was obliged to acknowledge that the God of Daniel was indeed the One and Only Real God; a God of gods, and a Lord of kings. Daniel was richly rewarded by the king. He became ruler of all the wise men in Babylon, and the chief of the eunuchs of the whole province of Babylon. History repeats itself. Joseph in Egypt had had similar distinction bestowed upon him. At Daniel's request, his three companions, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, were set by the king over the affairs of the province of Babylon.

Now, in spite of Nebuchadnezzar having acknowledged the Lord of Daniel as supreme, he had not the singleness of heart to walk in the Lord's ways. He sinned very grievously. He ordered a

golden image to be made. This he ordered to be set up where the mounds of Dura are seen to-day. A herald announced the king's decision. Daniel iii. verses 4-6: ' . . . To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up: and whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.'

Every one obeyed except Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, the three companions of Daniel, who was himself apparently absent at this time. This failure of theirs to obey his order was reported by certain Chaldæans to the ears of the king. He had the three Jews brought before him, and asked them if they did really refuse to worship the golden image which he had set up. He offered them a last chance, that if, when the signal was given by the music, they fell down and worshipped the image which he had made, all would be well; whereas, if they refused, they would be cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

Chapter iii. verses 16-20: 'Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up. Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego: therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated. And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace.'

This was done, and the heat of the furnace was so great that it slew the mighty men who threw Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego into the midst of the flames. Then Nebuchadnezzar saw a sight which astonished him. Chapter iii. verses 24, 25: 'Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered, and said unto the king, True, O King. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God' (a son of the gods.—R.V.)

Then the king spoke to the three men whom he had cast into the

fire, and called them to come forth from the furnace, and they came forth, and all who were there saw that the fire had no power on them; not a hair of their heads was singed, nor was there the smell of fire upon them. Nebuchadnezzar was completely convinced by this miraculous deliverance. He blessed the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, whose grand fidelity had been thus rewarded, and he made a decree, sentencing to death any one who blasphemed against the God of these three devoted Jews, whom he promoted to a high place in the province of Babylon. This story has its practical application to ourselves. It teaches us the wisdom, as well as the worthiness, of being true to God at any cost. We all are placed in the burning fiery furnace, exposed to its blasting breath, the furnace of the temptations of the world. If we hold firm to our faith in God, and do His will at any cost, He will bring us safely through. Nothing is too hard for Him to accomplish. When deliverance seems to our eyes impossible, He will bring it to pass.

In the fourth chapter of Daniel, we have an account of an edict of Nebuchadnezzar, which declares the wonders that the God of Israel had wrought upon him, and his own faith in Him (verse 3): 'How great are his signs! and how mighty are his wonders! his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation.'

The cause of the faith in God which Nebuchadnezzar expressed in the edict is explained as follows: Nebuchadnezzar had had a dream that troubled him exceedingly. Neither his magicians, nor his astrologers, nor his soothsayers, nor his wise men could explain it. So he sent for Daniel, the master of the magicians, as he called him. This was the dream (chapter iv. verses 10-16): ' . . . I saw, and behold a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great. The tree grew, and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth: the leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it. I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and, behold, a watcher and an holy one came down from heaven; he cried aloud, and said thus, Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit: let the beasts get away from under it, and fowls from his branches: nevertheless leave the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts in the

grass of the earth: let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him; and let seven times pass over him.'

Daniel explained that the tree represented King Nebuchadnezzar himself in his greatness and glory (chapter iv. verses 24-33): 'This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the most High, which is come upon my lord the king: That they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots; thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule. Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity. All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar. At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty? While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee. . . . The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws.'

This story teaches us two truths: the guilt of pride in the sight of God, and the reality of the rule that God exercises over the greatest kings of the earth. Nebuchadnezzar learned the lesson, and published the fact in the last words of his edict (verse 37): 'Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.' At the end of the time predicted, his understanding returned to the king, and he praised and blessed God for His mercies, and he was established in his kingdom, and 'excellent majesty was added' to him.

In the fifth chapter we have the story of Belshazzar's feast. Belshazzar, the king of Babylon, made a great feast in the palace, to a thousand of his lords, and when he had drunk wine, he ordered them to bring the vessels which had been taken away from the Temple at Jerusalem, and they drank from the sacred vessels, the king and his princes, his wives and his concubines, drank in them.

While they were impiously drinking wine from these golden cups, these heavy drinkers were suddenly appalled by a sight which met their eyes. 'Fingers of a man's hand came forth, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace' (chapter v. verse 5). Then the king was filled with terror, and his knees smote one against another. He sent for the wise men of Babylon, and offered the reward of a robe of scarlet, and a chain of gold, and the third place as ruler in the kingdom, to the man who would read the writing and interpret it. All the king's wise men came, and none could read the writing. At last the queen proposed to the king to send for Daniel, who, in the time of Nebuchadnezzar, had been master of the wise men. Daniel was brought to the king. The king repeated his offer to Daniel, whom, it is evident, he had never met before, from his opening words, verse 13: 'Art thou that Daniel . . . whom the king my father brought out of Jewry?' Daniel somewhat sternly rebuked Belshazzar for lifting himself up against the Lord of heaven, drinking from the vessels of His house, and praising his idol gods, and he finished his rebuke by giving the interpretation of the mysterious writing. Chapter v. verses 25-28: 'And this is the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.' Verses 30, 31 relate the execution of the sentence: 'In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old.'

An account of the festivities at the time of the fall of Babylon is given in Herodotus i. 193; the identification of Belshazzar is difficult and doubtful. Some think that he is the Labynetus of Herodotus. The name of Darius in this place is no less difficult to account for. Possibly the stories are not literal history, but edifying narratives based on facts. With the sixth chapter we come to the last of the stories which make up the narrative portion of the Book of Daniel. King Darius promoted Daniel to be one of the three presidents appointed to be over the one hundred and ten satraps, to whom he confided the government of the kingdom. This naturally produced the intensest jealousy of Daniel in the other presidents and satraps, who were Persians or Medes. They sought an opportunity to lay an accusation against Daniel, but found none. They then laid a plot, and persuaded the king to make a decree that forbade, on pain of death, any one to ask any petition of God or man

for thirty days, except of the king. The king, having signed the writing, it was impossible to revoke it, 'according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not' (verse 8).

Chapter vi. 10, 11: 'Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime. Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God.' The conspirators then went to the king, and asked him whether he had signed this decree. He said that he had, and they then accused Daniel of disregarding the decree.

Verse 14: 'Then the king, when he heard these words, was sore displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him; and he laboured till the going down of the sun to deliver him.' But Daniel's enemies came to the king again, and pressed him to carry out the decree. The decree provided that he who disregarded it should be cast into the den of lions. The king at last yielded reluctantly to the inexorable law, and Daniel was cast into the den. The king called after him with a last faint hope that his God would deliver him. Then the stone was brought and laid upon the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet and the signet of his lords. The king passed the night in his palace fasting and sleepless, grieving for Daniel.

Chapter vi. 19-23: 'Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions. And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: and the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions? Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever. My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt. Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should taken Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God.'

The king then punished Daniel's accusers by doing to them what they had forced him to do to Daniel. They were thrown into the lions' den, with their children and families, for in the East at that time, if the family of a criminal had been spared, the criminal would not have been considered to have been fully punished, his family being regarded as part of a man.

We now enter on the second part of the Book, consisting of the series of visions seen by Daniel. These visions are largely occupied with great political changes in the world—the rise and fall of kingdoms, and a sequence of events in history which need not detain us long. Chapter vii. records a vision which Daniel had in the first year of Belshazzar, king of Babylon. The vision was of four great beasts that came up from the sea: a lion with eagle's wings; a bear; a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a fowl, and four heads; and a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly. It devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped what remained with its feet; and it had ten horns, among which there came up an eleventh little horn, three of the horns were plucked up by the roots before it, for this little horn had eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things.

There are various interpretations of this part of the vision. One makes the horns to be European kingdoms, into which the Roman Empire divided. The little horn is an anti-Christian power, which is to arise out of them, in the future. By the other interpretation, now very largely accepted, the ten horns are taken to be the successors of Alexander the Great, the little horn Antiochus Epiphanes, the persecutor of the Jews at the time of the Maccabees. The chief point in this vision, however, is the advent of the Messianic kingdom, which immediately follows. Chapter vii. 13, 14: I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.'

Of these words, the 'Ancient of days' clearly represents God the Father. 'One like the Son of man,' who comes with the clouds of heaven, has been always held to be the Messiah. This is firstly the Jewish, and secondly the Christian, interpretation. And this view is for Christians made decisive by the application of those words by our Lord to Himself.

Matthew xxvi. 64: 'Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.'

Mark xiv. 62: 'And Jesus said, . . . and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.'

Mark xiii. 26: 'And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.'

Luke xxi. 27: 'And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.'

There are many more passages to the same effect, and Christ called Himself, and is repeatedly called in the New Testament, 'the Son of man.' This passage, be it remembered, was the very centre of the Jewish Messianic Hope, long before the Birth of Christ, and long before the time of His Ministry; and it was unmistakably taken by our Lord as spoken of Himself. On no other explanation than the Christian explanation can any adequate meaning or adequate fulfilment of this prophecy be pointed out.

Of the vision in chapter viii. it will be enough to say that it belonged to the third year of Gelshazzar, and the meaning of the vision may be explained thus (we must ask our readers to read for themselves chapter viii. verses 3-12). The explanation is given by the angel Gabriel to Daniel, and is to be found in verses 20 to 25. To work out a slight sketch of Gabriel's explanation, the ram is the empire of the Medes and Persians; the he-goat is the empire of the Greeks. The 'great horn' is the first King Alexander; the four horns which stand up after the great horn is broken are the four kingdoms which grew out of Alexander's empire after his death, *i.e.*, Antioch, Egypt, Thrace, Macedonia. The king represented by the little horn is probably Antiochus Epiphanes. The tenth to twelfth chapters contain a vision of Daniel, in the third year of Cyrus, king of Persia, by the river Tigris, here called the Hiddekel. Daniel had fasted for three full weeks when an angel came to him (chapter x. 6). 'His body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude.' Daniel fell to the ground in a deep sleep. The angel raised him up (verses 11-13): 'And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling. Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me: and I remained there with the kings of Persia.' The 'Prince' of Persia is the guardian angel of that country: Michael is the guardian angel of the Jews. The angel

describes the future in chapters xi. and xii. Here he describes the reigns of four Persian kings, and of Alexander the Great, and the breaking up of his kingdom after his death. Then the conflicts between the kings of the north, *i.e.*, the kings of Antioch, and between the kings of the south, *i.e.*, of Egypt. And lastly, and somewhat fully, the history of Antiochus Epiphanes and his efforts to suppress the Jewish religion (see chapter xi. verses 30-39). Verse 31 says: 'And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate.' This apparently refers to the defilement of the sanctuary of the Jews by Antiochus Epiphanes, and his attempt to suppress their religion and substitute for it his own heathen religion. This verse was referred to by our Lord, and the reference is to be found in St. Matthew xxiv. verse 15: 'When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place'

Lastly, the angel described to Daniel the deliverance of the Jews, the resurrection of the dead, the reward of the righteous. The Book of Daniel, with its predictions of the Messiah and the Messianic age, with its warmth of religious feeling and its unfaltering fidelity to God, did much to prepare the minds of pious Jews for the coming of the true Messiah. The spirit of the Book of Daniel resembles closely that of the writings of the older prophets. Its inspiration is essentially one with theirs. Its vision of the Messianic future is not less clear, though the details of the picture it represents are different. As a prophet, Daniel not merely foretells history but interprets it. The book deals with the empires of the world on a large scale, and shows that the course of the empires of the world is ordained by God, and that the history of the world is gradually carrying out the Divine purpose. Finally, the Book of Daniel stands as an inspiring force behind the last book of the Bible, the Book of the Revelation of St. John the Divine.

CHAPTER XVII.

HOSEA—JOEL—AMOS—JONAH—MICAH—NAHUM—
HABAKKUK—ZEPHANIAH—HAGGAI—ZECHARIAH—MALACHI.

WE have considered the Greater Prophets. We now turn to the Lesser Prophets. They are twelve in number, and though they are commonly called the Minor Prophets, their prophecies are many of them distinguished by deep spirituality and intense devotion to the moral law, and are often remarkably suited to the circumstances of our own time. They contain, moreover, passages of noble poetry, such as the great third chapter of the Prophet Habakkuk, which is one of the finest lyrical odes in Hebrew literature.

We shall take these prophets in their order in our English Bible, which is not always the order in which they lived. We begin then with Hosea.

Hosea prophesied during the latter part of the reign of King Jeroboam the Second of Israel, and in the reigns of his successors. Remarkably high and pure was Hosea's conception of the tender and forgiving love of Jehovah for Israel, learned, no doubt, from his own experience. When he called upon Israel to repent, he made his appeal on the ground of the proofs of Jehovah's love, to which Israel's history bore witness, for example, chapter xi. verses 1-4: 'When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt. . . . I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms; but they knew not that I healed them. I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love: and I was to them as they take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them.'

Jeroboam II., the king of Israel when Hosea began his prophetic ministry, was the most powerful and prosperous monarch of Jehu's dynasty. Hosea's ministry belonged to the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. The date approximately is from 746 B.C. to 735 or 734 B.C. The condition of the northern kingdom shortly before was morally at its worst. The prosperity of Jeroboam's long reign had issued in the luxury which commonly follows the growth of wealth; in selfishness which grows out of luxury; in oppression of the poor by the rich; and in a widespread idolatry and an open disregard of the moral law.

The successor to Jeroboam, Zachariah, was murdered after a

reign of a few months. A time of anarchy followed, to which Hosea refers in chapters vii. and viii. Ephemeral kings succeeded each other, supported alternately by Egypt and Assyria, and so in a few years' time we come to Pekah, whom we have already read of in Isaiah as allied with Rezin of Damascus in an attempt to conquer King Ahaz, and set up a usurper in Jerusalem. Pekah was succeeded by King Hosea, aided in his usurpation by the Assyrian king. Nevertheless he allied himself with Egypt against Assyria, and Samaria was besieged by Shalmaneser, and after a siege of three years, taken by Sargon, and the people of the northern kingdom (the ten tribes) carried away into captivity into Assyria.

Hosea was directed to marry a bad woman named Gomer, probably for more than one purpose. He had to seek to reform her by kindness and forgiveness, and in so doing his own character was to receive a necessary discipline for his high office of prophet, or speaker for God. He was intended to learn by practical experience the natural love of Jehovah towards unfaithful and erring Israel. He was told to call the children born of this strange union by symbolical names. And the symbolism of his own unfaithful and ungrateful wife represented Ephraim's ingratitude and infidelity in leaving Jehovah for Baal. After a period of punishment, Ephraim was to be restored, and receive the forgiveness of the Divine Husband.

This stress laid upon the forgiving love of Jehovah to Israel is Hosea's special distinction, and he turns to it again and again, even from his severest denunciations. Hosea is the prophet of the Decline and Fall of Israel. What his elder contemporary, Amos, saw from afar, Hosea saw close at hand: the destruction that was hastening upon the demoralised kingdom—demoralised not only by direct idolatry, but also by the calf or bull worship of Jehovah at Bethel. Hosea's prophecies have a tenderness of deep emotion which is peculiarly his own. As specimens of his writings we may quote chapter vi. 1-6: 'Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight. Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth. O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away. Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth: and thy judgments are as the

light that goeth forth. For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.'

And chapter xiv.: 'O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips. Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy. I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon. Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard him, and observed him: I am like a green fir tree. From me is thy fruit found. Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.'

Joel, who lived and prophesied at Jerusalem, follows Hosea in the order of the arrangement of our Old Testament. The date of the prophecy has to be determined by internal evidence, which points to a date after the Exile, perhaps about 500 B.C.; for example, the reference to the trade with Greece in Jewish slaves mentioned in Joel iii. 6 points to as late or even a later date. Supporters of an earlier date, however, rely on chapter iii. 1-6 as referring to the taking of Jerusalem in the reign of Jehoram, and find in the simple teaching of the book support for fixing its date in the early part of the reign of King Joash, then in his boyhood, and under the guidance of Jehoiada. Either date has some support from internal evidence, but whichever is adopted the spiritual teaching of the book retains its high value. Its theme is God's judgment, and may be expressed in the words of Abraham, pleading for mercy before Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed, 'Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?'

Of Joel we know nothing, except that his father's name was Pethuel. The occasion of the prophecy was a plague of locusts, and a drought, which caused great famine and distress (this visitation is very vividly described), and it symbolised to the Prophet the day of Jehovah; a visitation in judgment, which possibly a full repentance might avert. Repentance seems to have taken place, for from the

second chapter we have a full description of God's gracious change of treatment which that repentance had made possible. The visitation in judgment thus spared to the people is to fall upon their enemies. Chapter iii. 12-16: 'Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the Lord will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel.'

The name of Jehoshaphat has a meaning, namely, Jehovah hath judged or judges. The valley of decision means the valley of judgment. Joel realises at an earlier date than the author of Jonah that the Creator cares for His creatures, and that humanity ought to follow his example. This is the meaning of Joel i. verse 20: 'The beasts of the field cry also unto thee.' As a specimen of his prophecy we may take chapter ii. verse 12: 'Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him; even a meat offering and a drink offering unto the Lord your God? Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly: gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet. Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God? Then will the Lord be jealous for his land, and pity his people. Yea, the Lord will answer and say unto his people, Behold, I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, and ye shall be satisfied therewith: and I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen: but I will remove far off from you the northern army, and will drive him into a land barren and desolate, with his face toward the east sea, and his hinder part toward the utmost sea; and **his stink** shall

come up, and his ill savour shall come up, because he hath done great things. Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for the Lord will do great things. Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field: for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth her fruit, the fig tree and the vine do yield their strength. Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month. And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil. And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm and the caterpillar, and the palmer worm, my great army which I sent among you. And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed. And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God, and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed. And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call.'

A portion of this passage was quoted by St. Peter, in his sermon recorded in Acts ii. verses 16-21, and a comparison of the original passage, with St. Peter's use of it, will give us an example of the fact that the same spirit moves through both Testaments, and inspired the old Jewish Prophet as well as the Apostle of Christ.

The next prophet to claim our attention is Amos. He is the earliest of those prophets whose writings we possess, and whose date we know. He was an elder contemporary of Hosea, and the writings of the two prophets give a clear idea both of religious and moral life at that period in the northern kingdom. He prophesied in the eighth century before the Birth of Christ. Uzziah was king in Judah, Jeroboam the Second was king in Israel, and it was a period of great peace and prosperity in both kingdoms, especially in Israel. Jeroboam the Second had carried on the expansion of his territory till it almost equalled the extent of David's kingdom

at its largest. It was a time of great wealth and luxury and of general self-satisfaction in both kingdoms, and, as usual, when there is extreme luxury in the upper classes there was extreme poverty in the lower, and in spite of regular services and magnificent ceremonial there was a widespread reign of godlessness, showing itself especially in a growing contempt of the moral law. It was at this time that Amos appeared at Bethel, the chief sanctuary of the popular worship of Jehovah under the form of a bull, and announced the judgment that was rapidly approaching. Amos vii. verses 10-16: 'Then Amaziah the priest of Beth-el sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel: the land is not able to bear all his words. For thus Amos saith, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of their own land. Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there: but prophesy not again any more at Beth-el: for it is the king's chapel, and it is the king's court. Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son: but I was an herdsman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit. And the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel.'

Amos, we learn from this passage, belonged to Tekoa, where he was a shepherd, and had received the call of the Lord to go and prophesy at the king's chapel at Bethel, which was to Israel the religious centre that the Temple at Jerusalem was to Judah. Amos continued his ministry in the northern kingdom in spite of the opposition of the priests and rulers. He declared fearlessly that all the wealth of Israel and all the conquests of King Jeroboam would not save them from the coming judgment, nor would all their burnt-offerings win them acceptance with God; but for their evil doings they would be carried into captivity beyond Damascus. A clear and striking prophecy, many years before Assyria came on the scene, of the invasion by Shalmaneser, and the carrying into captivity by Sargon, which finally extinguished the northern kingdom and the ten tribes.

The prophecies of the Book of Amos are not only valuable as throwing a light on the moral decay of wealthy and ambitious Israel in the reign of Jeroboam the Second, but also as throwing a light on the problems of our own time in our own country. The worship of Jehovah at Bethel went on very regularly with magnificent ritual, but it is evident that the people regarded it as a matter for the priests alone, and the warnings of the moral law as a

mere form of empty words. Amos and Hosea both saw the decay of national character which was going on unnoticed under the splendid cloak of unexampled national prosperity. A nation which had practically forgotten God had lost the power which alone can bind a community together: the power of a common religion which issues in a common life. The nation of Israel had still the warning voice of the prophets among them, but soon the time of warning would be over, and the time of judgment would be come. Amos viii. 11: 'Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord.'

There is a considerable resemblance between the time of Amos and our own time. In England, as in Israel, prosperity is unexampled, and national wealth advances by leaps and bounds. Our territory, like theirs, was never greater. The services of religion are as well maintained in England as they were in Israel, but the religious census reveals in us something of the godlessness from which Israel suffered. The growth of vast fortunes in the hands of the few, and the public opinion which tends more and more to regard the possession of money as the supreme object and the chief distinction and chief aim in life, together with the growth of extreme poverty in the many, as an accompaniment or result of the growth of extreme wealth in the few, are signs that may be interpreted to mean that we need the voice of an Amos to awaken the nation from its slumber of self-complacency. God's unchanging laws are the same now as when Amos delivered his message, and the disregard of those laws will produce the same national results now as then.

In his prophecies Amos has left us many examples of the dignity and strength of a great simplicity, illuminated with a great self-forgetful purpose. This is a fine climax, which shows his easy power of expression (chapter iii. 3-8): 'Can two walk together, except they be agreed? Will a lion roar in the forest, when he hath no prey? will a young lion cry out of his den, if he have taken nothing? Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where no gin is for him? shall one take up a snare from the earth, and have taken nothing at all? Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it? Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets. The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?' Again, a fine passage begins thus (chapter v. 7-12): 'Ye who turn judgment to wormwood, and leave off righteousness

in the earth, seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night: that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: the Lord is his name: that strengtheneth the spoiled against the strong, so that the spoiled shall come against the fortress. They hate him that rebuketh in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly. Forasmuch therefore as your treading is upon the poor, and ye take from him burdens of wheat: ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine of them. For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right.'

To this may be added also chapter ix. 1-6: 'I saw the Lord standing upon the altar: and he said, Smite the lintel of the door, that the posts may shake: and cut them in the head, all of them; and I will slay the last of them with the sword: he that fleeth of them shall not flee away, and he that escapeth of them shall not be delivered. Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down: and though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them: and though they go into captivity before their enemies, thence will I command the sword, and it shall slay them: and I will set mine eyes upon them for evil, and not for good. And the Lord God of hosts is he that toucheth the land, and it shall melt, and all that dwell therein shall mourn: and it shall rise up wholly like a flood; and shall be drowned, as by the flood of Egypt. It is he that buildeth his stories (R.V. chambers) in the heaven, and hath founded his troop (R.V. vault) in the earth; he that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: the Lord is his name.'

The subject of the prophecy of Obadiah is the impending ruin of Edom. It is the shortest book of the prophets, consisting of only twenty-one verses. The cause of Obadiah's declaration of God's wrath against Edom is the wrong that Edom had done to Jerusalem in the day of its calamity. The nature of Edom's wickedness is plainly indicated in verses 11-14: 'In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them. But thou shouldest not have looked on the day of thy brother in the day that he became

a stranger; neither shouldest thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; neither shouldest thou have spoken proudly in the day of distress. Thou shouldest not have entered into the gate of my people in the day of their calamity; yea, thou shouldest not have looked on their affliction in the day of their calamity, nor have laid hands on their substance in the day of their calamity; neither shouldest thou have stood in the crossway, to cut off those of his that did escape; neither shouldest thou have delivered up those of his that did remain in the day of distress.'

And for these a day of the Lord, a day of retribution, is prophesied. The date of Obadiah can only be conjectured from internal evidence, as nothing is known of the prophet himself. The verses we have quoted point quite naturally to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans in 586 B.C., and to the way the Edomites rejoiced at the defeat of the Jews, and helped the Chaldeans to cut off the flyers. A comparison of Jeremiah (chapter lxix. verses 7-22) with Obadiah reveals the fact that one must have borrowed from the other, or both have borrowed from a prophecy older than either. The latter is probably the explanation. In addition to his way of regarding the enemies of Jerusalem as for that reason enemies of God, Obadiah shares with the other prophets their attitude towards the events of human history, and regards the Unseen God as the Governing Power, who makes and develops the lives of nations, as of men.

The name of the Prophet Jonah is a much more familiar one than any of the four prophets we have been considering, for we have all of us heard of Jonah and the 'great fish.' He is mentioned in the Book of Kings. 2 Kings xiv. verse 25: 'He (Jeroboam II.) restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which was of Gath-hepher.' Gath-hepher was in Zebulon, and a popular tradition still locates his grave near Nazareth. He foretold, as we have seen, to Jeroboam II. his success in the struggle with Syria. These prophecies are not preserved.

The Book of Jonah differs greatly from the books of any of the other prophets. It is not a collection of prophecies, but a narrative, or succession of scenes in the prophet's life. The story cannot be better told than in the actual words of the Bible in the first chapter of Jonah: 'Now the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me. But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord, and

went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. But the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken. Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep. So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not. And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah. Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us; What is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou? And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew; and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land. Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them. Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous. And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you. Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land; but they could not: for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them. Wherefore they cried unto the Lord, and said, We beseech thee, O Lord, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O Lord, hast done as it pleased thee. So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging. Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the Lord, and made vows. Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.'

Why was Jonah unwilling to preach repentance and the coming judgment of God to Nineveh? He was loath to do so because he was a Jew, and in his Jewish exclusiveness dreaded that God (see chapter iv. verse 2) might pity Nineveh, and have mercy upon it, and thus Jonah's prophecies of God's judgment would not be carried out. The story tells us he shipped at Joppa for Tarshish in Spain. A great storm arose. The sea became calm after Jonah was thrown

overboard by the sailors. The story goes on that the prophet was swallowed by a great fish, and, in response to his prayer to God, was cast up by the fish, after three days, upon the dry land. Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time, with the same command. This time Jonah went to Nineveh, and at his preaching, the burden of which was 'Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown' (chapter iii. verse 4), the people of Nineveh repented, believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth. Chapter iii. verses 6-10: 'For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.'

Thus Jonah's mission came to an end. His prophecy that in forty days Nineveh would be overthrown did not end as he expected, and Jonah was bitterly disappointed. Chapter iv. verses 1, 2: 'But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry. And he prayed unto the Lord and said, I pray, thee, O Lord, . . . Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live.' Though Jonah's mission to Nineveh was over, when they repented and were forgiven, God had still a most important lesson to teach His prophet. The latter had expected that God would carry out the heavy sentence he had been sent to pronounce on Nineveh. Without this result he considered his mission a failure. This was not only because he had prophesied the destruction of Nineveh, but because he had himself, from the narrow Jewish standpoint, rejoiced in the coming doom. That doom, he considered, was simple justice on the heathen, and he ventured to set up his own view of what God ought to do against his experience of what God had actually done.

While blaming Jonah are we not apt to do very much what he did? Do we not often settle beforehand how God may be expected to act towards ourselves or others, and then question His justice, or loving kindness, when He acts in a different way? This reasoning is, of course, as wrong and as foolish as the same reason-

ing was in Jonah. In us this fault is graver, for we sin against light which he did not possess. St. Paul says (Romans xi. verse 33): 'O! the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!' But, happily for Jonah, his conscience responded to the voice of God. It spoke to him and said, 'Dost thou well to be angry?' (chapter iv. verse 4). Jonah felt that his anger was not pleasing to God, and he began to realise that it was as unreasonable as it was wrong. It had all the time been the Lord's wish, and His wise purpose, that Jonah's preaching to the people of Nineveh should have the desired effect upon them, namely, that of causing them to repent of their wickedness and so receive forgiveness, before it was too late. We see, therefore, how Jonah had, against his will, been made to do the very thing the Lord had willed from the first. Surely it was best for Nineveh to repent and be saved, instead of being overthrown and hundreds of thousands destroyed, and much cattle. God taught Jonah the truth, and brought him to a better mind by the incident of a gourd which He had made to grow over Jonah, 'that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief' (verse 6).

God smote this gourd and it withered. This greatly incensed Jonah. God's voice spoke to his conscience, but he persisted at first against it. The tender consideration for animals in the last words of this passage, 'and much cattle,' ought to be noticed. There is a gradually growing revelation throughout the Old Testament of the existence of a duty of man towards God, as regard his treatment of the animals which God has placed in his care and keeping. God has given man dominion over the animals, to be used in conscious imitation of God's merciful dominion over man. This revelation, like the rest of God's revelations, is very clearly given, being made gradually as man is able to receive it. Such a progressive mode of teaching mankind is exactly the mode we adopt in teaching our children. We begin with the very easiest teaching, and then lead them on, step by step, from the lower to the higher. If we put the fullest knowledge on any subject before little children, it would be quite useless to them. They would not have the power to understand it. And just so God had to train the Israelites, teaching them gradually their duty towards God and their fellowmen, and then a little of their duty to animals, as they were able to receive it. Even at the present time we are far from having learned this valuable lesson, but some of us are awakening to a better understanding of it, and never has there been a time at which God's lessons in this duty have been more rapidly assimilated by those

scholars who have opened their hearts and minds to this particular department of our Heavenly Father's teaching.

Having brought to an end the narrative of Jonah, we may now give a little time to the interpretation of this story. The incident of the 'great fish' is what catches most people's attention, though it is the least important part of the book. First of all let us point to the obvious and almost universal inaccuracy by which this book is supposed to say *whale*, when what it really says is 'great fish.' The story of the swallowing of Jonah by the fish is taken by some as a literal history, by others as an inspired parable. In support of the latter interpretation, by which Jonah represents the Jewish nation swallowed up by Babylon and afterwards delivered, such a passage as Jeremiah li. 44 may be quoted, where God says: 'And I will punish Bel in Babylon, and I will bring forth out of his mouth that which he hath swallowed up.' But, as a matter of fact, the incident of the 'great fish' is not essential to the religious and moral teaching of the Book of Jonah. This will be seen if a deliverance from drowning by an unexpected ship were substituted for the incident of the fish: God's lessons would still remain the same. And what are these lessons? They are manifold. There are the lesser lessons as well as the ones of greater importance. For example, that true repentance and true fear of God bring salvation from God. This is shown in the case of the sailors; again in the case of Jonah himself, and again in the case of Nineveh. Another lesson is the teaching that a prophecy is conditioned as to its fulfilment, depends on conditions and is not absolute, so that an inspired prophecy of judgment, which would be carried out if there were no repentance, may be stopped by repentance.

But by far the most important lesson conveyed in the Book of Jonah was that God's gracious purposes were not confined to the Jews alone, as they were then too commonly supposed to be, but belonged to the heathen also, if they would turn away from their sins and turn to God with a true repentance. Jonah himself represented the popular, but false, doctrine that the Gentiles were outside the pale. He tried not to preach to Nineveh at all, and when his preaching moved them to repentance, and they were forgiven, he was deeply angered, because the doom of destruction he had declared was not carried out. The closing words of the book pronounce the final condemnation upon this narrow Jewish belief, and in the brief reference to the sparing of the animals disclose a marvellous vision of God's all-embracing fatherly love, one of the most remarkable anticipations in the Old Testament of the revelation of God in Christ. While there can be no doubt that Jonah was a real

prophet, who lived in the time of Jeroboam the Second, and while the lessons we have mentioned and the purpose of the book are generally agreed on, different views are entertained by different students as to the interpretation.

It has been taken very commonly as a literal narrative of facts, and taken in this way it conveys very effectively the lessons we have referred to. It has also been taken as an allegory of the history of Israel as a nation, Jonah representing Israel. Israel was called upon by God to witness for Him among the heathen, to be the prophet-nation—the nation that was to speak for God. Israel disliked and refused to perform this mission. In His mercy God sent the huge Empire of Babylon (the great fish) to swallow up the prophet-nation, in order to teach it its duty. Thus swallowed up, Israel, like Jonah, turned to the Lord and was afterwards miraculously thrown up by Babylon, *i.e.*, helped to return from exile. After this return the Israelites were many of them disappointed that the doom pronounced by the prophets on the great heathen nations was not carried out immediately as they had expected.

Those who take this latter view of the book as an allegory retain the full value of the religious lessons that are the purpose for which the book was written. Our Lord's reference to the incident of Jonah and the fish is perfectly clear if we take the literal view, but perhaps needs a word of explanation if we take the allegorical one. As Israel was swallowed up by Babylon, and yet emerged with life, and in a better condition than before, so our Lord was swallowed up by the grave and remained there three days, and, contrary to all probabilities, emerged from the grave, not only alive, but exalted to the Risen life of Glory and Power.

The next prophet, Micah, was younger than Isaiah, but a contemporary. Unlike Isaiah, who was a power at court, Micah lived among the poorer classes, and knew from experience their wrongs and their needs. He was a native of Moresheth, a small town of the maritime plain near Gath. A man of the people, he sympathised with all the troubles of the people, and this sympathy is his distinguishing characteristic.

The teaching of Micah is purely religious and moral. He did not aim at influencing the policy of the nation, as Isaiah did. He saw idolatry and godlessness among the princes and the people of Judah. And he saw no less the injustice to and oppression of the poor growing among the upper classes; and he saw with clearness the judgment coming on the nation for the wrongs of the poor. When he mentions Babylon, it is only as one of the chief cities of the Assyrian Empire. He declares in the plainest way the punish-

ment which must follow all the evils which deface Judah and Jerusalem. (Micah iii. verses 9-12: 'Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob, and princes of the house of Israel, that abhor judgment, and pervert all equity. They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity. The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the Lord, and say, Is not the Lord among us? none evil can come upon us. Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest.'

But together with his vision of a coming judgment, he has a clear vision of the nation's restoration. Zion is to be clothed with even greater beauty than before. It is to become a spiritual centre for the whole earth. The fulfilment in Christ of such a passage as the following is perfectly plain to us, who see the actual establishment of Christ's kingdom on the earth. Chapter iv. verses 1-5: 'But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it. For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever.'

Nor was the Messianic meaning of the passage missed by the Jews, at the time of our Saviour's birth, as we know from the quotation of chapter v. verse 2, by the chief priests and scribes to Herod, when he asked where Christ was to be born: 'But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.'

We cannot leave Micah without giving one of his best passages, one of the most beautiful and spiritual of the definitions of religion

in the prophets. Chapter vi. verses 6-8: 'Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?'

Nahum was an Elkoshite, a native of a village which has never been clearly located. The prophecy of Nahum is directed entirely against Nineveh. As regards the date of Nahum's prophecy, we have our sole but sufficient guidance in the work itself. The capture of Thebes in Egypt by the Assyrians under Assurbanipal shortly after 664 B.C. is alluded to as just having occurred. The destruction of Nineveh by the hordes of the north and the Babylonians had not yet taken place. That fixes Nahum's date as after 664 B.C. and before 606 B.C. The dignity and force of Nahum's poetry approaches often very nearly to that of Isaiah, *e.g.*, he says (chapter i. verse 3): 'The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet.'

The following is the conclusion of his prophecy (chapter iii. verses 1-3, 12): 'Woe to the bloody city! it is all full of lies and robbery; the prey departeth not; the noise of a whip, and the noise of the rattling of the wheels, and of the prancing horses, and of the jumping chariots. The horseman lifteth up both the bright sword and the glittering spear: and there is a multitude of slain, and a great number of carcases; and there is none end of their corpses; they stumble upon their corpses. . . . All thy strong holds shall be like fig trees with the first-ripe figs; if they be shaken, they shall even fall into the mouth of the eater. Behold, thy people in the midst of thee are women: the gates of thy land shall be set wide open unto thine enemies: the fire shall devour thy bars. Draw thee waters for the siege, fortify thy strong holds: go into clay, and tread the mortar, make strong the brickkiln. There shall the fire devour thee; the sword shall cut thee off, it shall eat thee up like the cankerworm: make thyself many as the cankerworm, make thyself many as the locusts. Thou has multiplied thy merchants above the stars of heaven: the cankerworm spoileth, and fleeth away. Thy crowned are as the locusts, and thy captains as the great grasshoppers, which camp in the hedges in the cold day, but

when the sun ariseth they flee away, and their place is not known where they are. Thy shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria: thy nobles shall dwell in the dust; thy people is scattered upon the mountains, and no man gathereth them. There is no healing of thy bruise; thy wound is grievous: all that hear the bruit of thee shall clap the hands over thee; for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?

Habakkuk was a prophet of whom we know nothing save the contents of his great work, the great vision which he saw from the watch-tower of faith. He prophesied probably at the beginning of the Chaldæan supremacy, during the reign of Jehoahaz, son of Josiah, or his successor Jehoiakim, perhaps about 600 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar had conquered Pharaoh Necho at Carchemish, and Jeremiah had at once seen that Western Asia must fall into the hands of the Chaldæans, who had three years before destroyed Nineveh. Habakkuk throws his prophecy into a dramatic form—a dialogue between God and himself. He begins by pleading with God on account of the wickedness and lawlessness of the land. Jehovah replies that His judgment on Israel is at hand (chapter i. verses 5-11): 'Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you. For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwelling places that are not theirs. They are terrible and dreadful: their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves. Their horses also are swifter than the leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves: and their horsemen shall spread themselves, and their horsemen shall come from far; they shall fly as the eagle that hasteth to eat. They shall come all for violence: their faces shall sup up as the east wind, and they shall gather the captivity as the sand. And they shall scoff at the kings, and the princes shall be a scorn unto them: they shall deride every strong hold; for they shall heap dust, and take it. Then shall his mind change, and he shall pass over, and offend, imputing this his power unto his god.'

Habakkuk, like Jeremiah, sees that Chaldæa is the instrument of God; but he also sees that the idolatry, ambition, and violence of Chaldæa will be chastised in due time. Habakkuk was one of the greatest among the Minor Prophets for power of imagination and splendour of language, and has left some notable sayings, such as, 'The just shall live by his faith.' It is difficult to surpass the magnificent manifestation of God described in the third chapter, 3-15, 'God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran.

Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. And his brightness was as the light; he had horns (rays, R.V.) coming out of his hand: and there was the hiding of his power. Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals (fiery bolts, R.V.) went forth at his feet. He stood, and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: his ways are everlasting. I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction: and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble. Was the Lord displeased against the rivers? was thine anger against the rivers? was thy wrath against the sea, that thou didst ride upon thine horses, and thy chariots of salvation? Thy bow was made quite naked, according to the oaths of the tribes, even thy sword. Selah. Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers. The mountains saw thee, and they trembled: the overflowing of the water passed by: the deep uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands on high. The sun and moon stood still in their habitation: at the light of thine arrows they went, and at the shining of thy glittering spear. Thou didst march through the land in indignation, thou didst thresh the heathen in anger. Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, even for salvation with thine anointed; thou woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked, by discovering (laying bare, R.V.) the foundation unto the neck. Selah. Thou didst strike through with his staves the head of his villages: they came out as a whirlwind to scatter me: their rejoicing was as to devour the poor secretly. Thou didst walk through the sea with thine horses, through the heap of great waters.'

This is a lyric ode intended to be sung to music. Selah, meaning 'strike up,' indicates this as it does so frequently in the Psalms. Note the first words of verse 11: 'The sun and moon stood still,' there we have exactly the statement of what occurred at the Valley of Beth-Horon at the word of Joshua. Few would be so foolish as to take noble poetry like this literally; there is a truth of poetry as well as a literal truth, and to take a truth of poetry literally is to falsify it.

Zephaniah's prophecies have for their date the reign of King Josiah, clearly before the great reformation in his eighteenth year, when he put down,—probably under Zephaniah's influence—the idolatry attacked and exposed by Zephaniah. He was a contemporary of Jeremiah, and apparently his was the first prophecy after the pause of fifty years which succeeded the death of Isaiah. All we know of this prophet is contained in the opening of his Book, and we may give the first sixteen verses as a representative portion of

his prophecy (Zephaniah i. verses 1-16): 'The word of the Lord which came unto Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hizkiah, in the days of Josiah, the son of Amon, king of Judah. I will utterly consume all things from off the land, saith the Lord. I will consume man and beast; I will consume the fowls of the heaven, and the fishes of the sea, and the stumblingblocks with the wicked; and I will cut off man from off the land, saith the Lord. I will also stretch out mine hand upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place, and the name of the Chemarims with the priests: and them that worship the host of heaven upon the housetops; and them that worship and that swear by the Lord, and that swear by Malcham (Milcom); and them that are turned back from the Lord; and those that have not sought the Lord, nor inquired for him. Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord God: for the day of the Lord is at hand: for the Lord hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath bid his guests. And it shall come to pass in the day of the Lord's sacrifice, that I will punish the princes, and the king's children, and all such as are clothed with strange apparel. In the same day also will I punish all those that leap on the threshold, which fill their master's houses with violence and deceit. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord, that there shall be the noise of a cry from the fish-gate, and an howling from the second, and a great crashing from the hills. Howl, ye inhabitants of Maktesh, for all the merchant people are cut down; all they that bear silver are cut off. And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees: that say in their heart, the Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil. Therefore their goods shall become a booty, and their houses a desolation: they shall also build houses, but not inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, but not drink the wine thereof. The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness. A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers.'

We pass on to Haggai. We read about him in Ezra, and about his work. He was a contemporary and fellow-worker with Zechariah. His prophecy is dated the second year of Darius Hystaspes, 520 B.C. The main object was to stir up the returned Exiles to rebuild the Temple. The Temple was still unbuilt, it may be remembered,

sixteen years after the Return. God's displeasure at this neglect had been, Haggai points out, shown in a great drought and a consequent great failure of crops. Haggai was very possibly born at Babylon during the Captivity. He took an active part with Zechariah urging the Jewish Exiles who had returned to their country to abandon the shameful delay which had gone on so long, and at once to set to work and begin building the Temple. The definite result of Haggai's activity was the carrying out of that rebuilding.

Chapter ii. verses 1-9: 'In the seventh month, in the one and twentieth day of the month, came the word of the Lord by the prophet Haggai, saying, Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and to the residue of the people, saying, Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing? Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work: for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts: according to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not. For thus saith the Lord of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts.'

This is a fair specimen of his writing, which contains a vigorous appeal to perform a definite and urgent duty.

Zechariah was, as we have seen, the contemporary and colleague of Haggai, and his prophecies were delivered at the same time and for the same purpose. The joint efforts of Zechariah and Haggai were marked by immediate results, for a month after their prophecies, which were simultaneous, followed the laying of the foundation of the Temple. The first eight chapters give eight visions of the night granted to this prophet, and intended to encourage the Jews, especially Zerubbabel, the leader of the people, and Joshua, the head of the priests, to go on with the building of the Temple. The chief points in each vision are shown to the prophet by an angel.

The first of these visions is given in the first chapter, verses 8-18: 'I saw by night, and behold a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle trees that were in the bottom; and behind

him were there red horses, speckled, and white. Then said I, O my lord, what are these? And the angel that talked with me said unto me, I will show thee what these be. And the man that stood among the myrtle trees answered and said, These are they whom the Lord hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth. And they answered the angel of the Lord that stood among the myrtle trees, and said, We have walked to and fro through the earth, and, behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest. Then the angel of the Lord answered and said, O Lord of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years? And the Lord answered the angel that talked with me with good words and comfortable words. So the angel that communed with me said unto me, Cry thou, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy. And I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease: for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction. Therefore thus saith the Lord; I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it, saith the Lord of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem. Cry yet, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad; and the Lord shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem.'

The fourth chapter contains the vision of the golden candlestick (or lampstand), representing the restored community: 'And the angel that talked with me came again, and waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep, and said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have looked, and behold a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top thereof: two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof. So I answered and spake to the angel that talked with me, saying, What are these, my lord? Then the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord. Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts. Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it. Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the Lord of

hosts hath sent me unto you. For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven; they are the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth. Then answered I, and said unto him, What are these two olive trees upon the right side of the candlestick and upon the left side thereof? And I answered again, and said unto him, What be these two olive branches which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves? And he answered me and said, Knowest thou what these be? And I said, No, my lord. Then said he, These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth.' (The two anointed ones were Joshua and Zerubbabel.)

Chapter vi. begins with a vision of the four chariots of God, sent forth to execute God's judgments in the earth. One chariot has red horses, the second black, the third white, and the fourth grised (*i.e.*, grey) and bay horses. These chariots, the angel explained, are the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth. The one which goes northwards is to satisfy its wrath on Babylon. In this chapter the prophet prophesies of the Branch, saying, 'Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord' (verse 12).

The immediate meaning of this is commonly referred to Zerubbabel, but the ultimate meaning has been seen to refer to the Messiah, who is also referred to in chapter iii. verse 8: 'for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH.'

The eighth chapter is a picture of the Messianic Kingdom, the spiritual nature of which the following passage clearly indicates (viii. verses 16, 17): 'These are the things that ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates: and let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the Lord.'

In the ninth chapter we have a celebrated passage predicting the Advent of the Messiah as the Prince of Peace (verses 9, 10): 'Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.' Part of this prophecy is used by St. Matthew in describing Our

Lord's entry into Jerusalem riding on an ass's colt, to show that that entry was that of the Messiah, predicted by Zechariah centuries before in the passage we have just given. St. Matthew xxi. verses 4, 5: 'All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.'

The distinguishing characteristic of Zechariah (though chapters ix. to xiv. are very commonly taken to be by another author than Zechariah, and certainly are very unlike the other chapters in their Messianic subject-matter and point of view) is the clearness of his predictions in his later chapters of the coming of the Messianic Age, ushered in by the coming of the Messiah Himself. The prophet uses the great Messianic Hope as a motive to urge on the rebuilding of the Temple, and then God would take up His abode in His Temple. He seems to make the arrival of the Messianic Age and the Messiah dependent on the rebuilding of the Temple. With God in His Temple, the Messiah might be expected soon. The key to the whole Book viewed as a unity is the Messianic Hope, and the Central Figure is the Messianic King. The last two verses of chapter xiv. express very beautifully the prophet's ideal of holiness, which is to come, in every part of common life: 'In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; and the pots in the Lord's House shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the Lord of hosts: and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and seethe therein: and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the House of the Lord of hosts.'

The last writer in point of time, as well as of place, in the Old Testament, is the Prophet Malachi, which is perhaps not a proper name, but a word signifying 'My Messenger.' When Malachi wrote, the Temple had already been rebuilt, and public worship was regularly carried on in it. The love of idols was gone, and the evils which he assails were not the old evils of idolatry, oppression of the poor, or gross immorality, but rather such errors as delays and neglect of the people in paying the sacred dues; intermarriage with foreign women; degeneracy in the priests. These are just the evils we have seen mentioned in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah, and they point to the same date as that of those two reformers. In the eighth verse of the first chapter we read that a Persian governor was ruling over Judah, which was now a Persian Province, and this evidence, too, is in favour of a date not long before the second ar-

rival of Nehemiah, 433 B.C. It is evident from the contents in the second and third chapters that there was a good deal of questioning of the Divine Government of the world. People complained that righteousness seemed to find no greater favour with God than unrighteousness, and accordingly they neglected to pay tithes, and make their offerings. The priests, too, dared in their neglectfulness to present inferior and unclean offerings to God, which they would not have dared to offer to the Persian governor. To the complaints of the people Malachi replies that the day is coming when God will own those which belong to Him and punish the wicked.

Chapter iii.: 'Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' sope: and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years. And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the Lord of hosts. For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed. Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return? Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of hosts. Your words have been stout against me, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, What have we spoken so much against thee?

Ye have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts? And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered. Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.'

Chapter iv.: 'For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the Lord of hosts. Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.'

Thus we have come to the end at once of the prophets and of the Old Testament. The books of the prophets are full of beautiful thoughts and wise teaching. It is wonderful to think how God inspired this unique succession of men, many of them of humble origin, to carry His message, not only to their own times, but to the far-off after ages; not only to the Jews, but to the foremost nations of the modern world. The writings of the prophets stand out brightly against the gloomy background of the past, and still retain the power of illuminating men's lives in the present. The influence of their teaching possesses its pristine educating power. The reading of their works is able still to focus our spiritual eye on the Divine Being, the Master-mind of which the whole visible universe is the expression, whose mercy and love, even to the rebellious, foreshadowed and pointed to the coming of the Great Deliverer, who was to accomplish the Purpose of the Eternal, and establish the Kingdom of God on the earth.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE NEW TESTAMENT.

THE ORIGIN AND CANON OF THE SCRIPTURES—THE MANUSCRIPTS—THE VERSIONS—OUR ENGLISH BIBLE—INTERVAL BETWEEN THE OLD TESTAMENT AND THE NEW—THE PREPARATION FOR CHRIST'S COMING—THE SITUATION IN PALESTINE—THE SYNOPTICS—THE FOURTH GOSPEL.

WE have given some account of the thirty-nine Books of the Old Testament, written mostly in Hebrew, a few passages only in Aramaic. The second part of the Bible we are about to enter on is the collection of writings known as the New Testament, which are all in Greek except some few words of Aramaic. It seems a fitting place here to explain the familiar word 'Testament,' which, like many familiar terms accepted without being inquired into, is very commonly not rightly understood. The word 'Testament' (a disposition of property by will) was chosen to represent a word in the original Hebrew 'Berith,' in the Greek 'Diathekè' (more accurately translated by the word 'Covenant'), in order to represent the absolute authority of God in His Covenant with man. And so 'Testament' became the title of the books containing God's Covenant or promises of blessings, which became man's inheritance in the death of Christ. The Old and New Testament should be understood in the sense of the Old and New Covenant, that is, the agreements made between God and His people under the Jewish and under the Christian dispensation.

The question occurs to us, How did the Old Testament come into existence? At first no doubt the earliest religious experience was handed down by word of mouth. It is not very probable, though quite possible, that the Patriarchs used the Babylonian method of records,—clay tablets, on which, while the clay was soft, the cuneiform writing was impressed. In process of time various collections of the traditions and the religious songs—at first perhaps oral, then written—began to be made. There are many references to other books in the Old Testament, such as the Book of Jasher, quoted in Joshua, and 'the book of the wars of the Lord,' quoted in Numbers, which point to the fact that the Old Testament, in its present form, is composed of materials drawn from earlier collec-

tions. This brings before us the fact that there were other writings of the Jews besides the Old Testament. There were in fact a great many, and the latest of these writings, not contained in the Old Testament, have come down to us and are known as the Apocrypha. Why is this distinction made? The simplest answer is that the general consent of the Jewish Church gradually decided to make this separation. The experience of the Jewish Church of the inspiration and value of these chosen books was the reason for that decision. The steps by which this selection of the books was made are very little known, but there is no doubt that the whole chosen collection, known as the Old Testament, was formed gradually by the amalgamation of smaller collections. So much for the formation of the Canon of the Old Testament. Canon, of course, means the collection of books in the Old and New Testament, originally signifying a measuring rod, and so the space covered by it, and hence the books measured off from all other books.

Now as to the Canon of the New Testament. It is a collection of twenty-seven books. The Jewish Bible, the Bible used by Our Lord and His disciples, the books of our Old Testament, became quite naturally the Bible of the early Christian Church. Round the Jewish Scriptures gradually accumulated a large number of Christian writings. Those which stood the test of the experience of the Christian Church, which was guided as Our Lord had promised by the Holy Spirit, were gradually accepted as canonical. The reverence for the Jewish Scriptures felt by the early Christians was far too deep for any one of them to write a line with the deliberate intention of adding to them. It was the immediate necessities of the Church which called the writings of the New Testament into existence. In the case of the New Testament, as we have seen in the case of the Old, a large quantity of apocryphal writings, such as the Shepherd of Hermas and the Epistle of Barnabas, had to be rejected as inferior. The rejection of the one body of writings as apocryphal and the acceptance of the other as canonical, was made by the general consent of the Christian Church. The selection of the books finally included in the New Testament was very gradual. The position of some of the books of our New Testament was long a subject of doubt. As late as 325 A.D. Eusebius, in his Ecclesiastical History, divided the books into three sections: books universally acknowledged; books disputed; books spurious. The section of the disputed books includes those known by the names of James, Jude, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Hebrews, Revelation.

St. Jerome towards the close of the fourth century accepted all the books of our present Canon, as did St. Augustine, who was

present at the Council of Carthage A.D. 397, when the decision of the Church was finally given. As the books were all written in the first century it will be seen that this decision was neither hasty nor arbitrary, but the clear result of the collective experience of the Church, testing the books through the centuries, and holding fast to only that which it found good. Clearly we owe the Old Testament to the Jewish Church. Members of that Church first wrote the books by the inspiration of God. The Church itself afterwards selected the books by the same inspiration, and the same process in the Christian Church gave us our New Testament. Whereas the Old Testament spreads over many centuries, and represents the collected religious experience of inspired men during many years, Abraham's date being probably about 2250 B.C., the New Testament was all written in the course of less than a century. The New Testament Scriptures were all of them, as we have seen, written in Greek, which had become one of the two languages generally understood and used in Palestine in Our Lord's time, the other being Aramaic, the language of Syria.

In the New Testament the Gospels come first, because they are by far the most important books of the collection. But the Epistles of St. Paul were the first to be written. The first of these was the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, generally dated between 49 and 53 A.D. At first all teaching in the Christian Church was by word of mouth. This oral teaching by the mouths of the Apostles was for some time felt to be amply sufficient, even in the case of instruction as to the foundation facts of the Christian religion, instruction as to the Life, Death, and Resurrection of our Lord. This dependence on memory was also the rule at that time among Jewish teachers, and it will be remembered that our Lord Himself wrote nothing, nothing at least that has come down to us. He trusted to the memory of His disciples to preserve His teaching, and it is thanks to them that we can still read our Lord's own words. As the Church increased in numbers, and the labours of St. Paul and later missionaries carried the Gospel to distant lands, and especially as heresies began to appear, the need of a written form of the Apostolic tradition began to be felt, notes of the Apostles' teaching began to be made, and narratives based on these memories of the Gospel History began to be circulated. This we know from the classical preface of St. Luke, i. 1-4: 'Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; it seemed good to me also, having had

perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed' (i.e., catechised).

St. Luke's Gospel was, as he states, written expressly to supply a more accurate record of the facts, in order to give to Theophilus, and to other Christians who were in his position, a more perfect understanding of them. The reason the four Gospels were accepted as superior to the other attempts, referred to by St. Luke, was partly that they were of Apostolic authorship, or else supplied by the experience of an Apostle, and partly that they were superior records in themselves. It is important to remember that our four Gospels are the original Gospels received in the early Christian Church. This fact is proved by a mass of evidence, of which we may merely mention that of Justin Martyr, who died 150 A.D., and that of the list known as the Muratorian Fragment, which belongs to the latter part of the same century. The reason why we allude to this mass of evidence of the acceptance and use of our four Gospels, is because we have no copies of the New Testament older than the fourth century. The cause of this absence of early copies is partly, perhaps, because they were written on perishable materials, but it is due chiefly to the deliberate destruction of the Scriptures in the persecution of Diocletian, 302 A.D.

This brings us to ask the question on what these first copies of the Scriptures were written. Apparently on the material referred to by St. John in the twelfth verse of his second epistle: 'Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink: but I trust to come to you, and speak face to face' The paper referred to here consisted of the separated layers of the papyrus reed, which grows freely in the Nile, and is the 'bulrush' used to make the ark in which Moses was found by Pharaoh's daughter. It is interesting to note that the Bible ultimately derives its name from this reed. *Biblos* is the Greek name of the inner layer of the papyrus, and was afterwards applied to the paper made from it, and then to the book proper written on it. From the diminutive, *Biblion*, comes the plural, *Biblia*, which, owing to a mistake, due to its apparently feminine termination, was used as a singular in Latin. Thus the word Bible means: Book, as derived from the Latin; and Books, as derived from the Greek. Both derivations suit the meaning. Our Bible is both one Book, the single inspiration of God, and a library of Books, the work of many men. Bible in the singular is used in Mark xii. verse 26, for the Book of the Mosaic Law.

A few years after the destruction of the manuscripts by Diocletian, to which we have already alluded, came the triumph of Christianity in the conversion of the Emperor Constantine to the Christian faith. In the year 330 A.D. the Emperor ordered fifty copies of the Scriptures to be prepared for the churches in Constantinople; a sign that the old copies had disappeared. The fifty copies were written, probably, on vellum; for our first manuscripts, which are on vellum, date from the fourth century, and from that time on we find a great and growing increase in the number of manuscripts. The manuscripts which have survived are divided into classes according to the shape of the letters. The most important class is written entirely in capital letters. These manuscripts are called 'Uncials,' and there are about one hundred of them. The earliest of these is the Vatican Manuscript, known as Codex B, in the Vatican Library at Rome, dating from the fourth century. The next is the Sinaitic Manuscript, known as Codex \aleph , which is in possession of the Greek Church, and is in the Imperial Museum at St. Petersburg. Then comes the Alexandrian, known as Codex A, which is in the Manuscript-room of the British Museum. It was given to Charles I. by the Patriarch of Constantinople in 1628. There is an Arabic inscription on the first sheet saying that it was written by Thekla the Martyr.

The other and larger class of manuscripts is called *Cursives*, from the smaller 'running' hand, which was used from the ninth century on. The late date of these makes their value much less. There are nearly two thousand of them.

Another class of manuscripts is called *Palimpsests*, *i.e.*, manuscripts that had the original writing rubbed out, or partially rubbed out, to make room for new writing, the object, no doubt, being economy. Codex C, in the National Library in Paris, is the best-known specimen of a Palimpsest.

It may be observed here that some of these manuscripts, like the Vatican one, contain the Greek version of the Old Testament as well as the Greek original of the New. We may add that while our Greek manuscripts of the Bible date back to the fourth century, none of the Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament are earlier than the tenth century.

Now a word as to the Versions. The oldest, a most important version, is the version of the Old Testament in Greek, known as the Septuagint, from the tradition that it was made by seventy scribes or scholars, sent from Jerusalem by the High Priest Eleazar to Alexandria at the request of Ptolemy Philadelphus, 285-247 B.C. Actually the greater part of the work was carried out in the second

and third centuries before Christ. This version is of special importance, because it is from it Our Lord quoted, and it was in common use throughout Palestine. This version introduces us to the Greek New Testament, the language of which is largely derived from it. Most of the quotations from the Old Testament in the New are made from this Greek version direct, and not from the Hebrew. From this version sprang most of the other old versions, which are too numerous to mention. Among these is the *Itala*, or Old Latin Version. When revising this old Latin version, St. Jerome formed the idea of translating the Old Testament from the Hebrew. The work began in 390 A.D., and occupied him fourteen years. The completed work is known as the *Vulgate*, or Popular Version.

The version, however, which has done and is doing the greatest work in the world is our English Version of 1611, known as the Authorised Version; authorised, not by ecclesiastical authority, but by common consent of the nation, won by its surpassing merits as the great history of the growth of the greatest of religions. This is the English Book of Books, for it reigns over the hearts and lives not only of the people of the United Kingdom but also of that greater England beyond the Seas, including our Colonies and the great republic of our kindred in the United States. The English Bible has done more than anything else to unify the Anglo-Saxon race by forming a national character that aims at serious and noble ideals, and by developing a literature not unworthy of being the fruit of this dominant influence. How did we get this most precious of our common possessions? The names of Cædmon and Bede and Alfred and Ælfric recall the earlier efforts to give England the Bible in the vernacular: the first reminding us that the dawn of English poetry, more than twelve centuries ago, was a paraphrase of Genesis in verse. But the foremost great figure in the work of giving men the Bible in English was John Wiclif, Rector of Lutterworth. A born reformer, he relied on the Bible to renew the nation's life. With the help of Nicholas de Hereford, one of his friends, the work was done. By the year 1382 the whole Bible was in the hands of the English people in their mother tongue. Wiclif's Bible was translated from the *Vulgate*, and the written copies (printing was not yet discovered) had a great circulation in spite of the efforts to suppress them. If Cædmon's paraphrase was a beginning of English poetry. Wiclif's Bible and Wiclif's pamphlets were the beginning of English prose.

Exactly one hundred years after Wiclif's death, a man was born whose life-work was to improve upon that Wiclif had done. William Tindale studied at Oxford, and afterwards proceeded to Cam-

bridge. About 1521 he decided to give his life to the translation of the New Testament, and afterwards of the whole Bible, from the original Hebrew and Greek into English, which was to be more faithful than Wiclif's version made from the Latin Vulgate. Finding no encouragement in England—and, indeed, no safe place—to carry out his plans, Tindale went to Germany. In 1525 or 1526 he brought out at Worms a complete edition of the New Testament, of which three thousand copies were issued. This was from the press of F. Schoeffer the younger. Copies were sent to England, and were eagerly received on the one hand, and yet so vigorously destroyed on the other that only one complete copy remains. After that he worked at the books of the Old Testament, but was taken and imprisoned by his enemies, and suffered martyrdom in 1536 at Vilvorde, near Brussels. His qualifications had been, besides his high resolve, a good knowledge of Hebrew and Greek, with such a rare mastery of idiomatic English that the unrivalled beauty of the Authorised Version is chiefly due to its large borrowings from his inspired renderings. Rogers, his fellow-worker, who was really responsible for the later 'Matthew's' Bible, embodying the work of Tindale and Coverdale, died at the stake, 1555. Coverdale, too, had carried on Tindale's work in the version of 1535, and early in 1538 undertook a new revision, based on 'Matthew's' Bible. The result was that the Great (*i.e.*, large) Bible was issued in 1539, with Cranmer's preface appointing its use in churches. Though merely a revision, Coverdale's work has had an important influence on our Authorised Version, in which many felicities of expression are due to him, and help to make it the greatest work in English prose.

The Prayer-book version of the Psalms is taken from Coverdale's Bible, which by means of this part of it has had a lasting influence on the devotional life of the nation. We must pass on now, merely naming the Genevan Bible of the Marian exiles, and the fully-authorised Bishops' Bible, to our so-called Authorised Version of 1611, seventy-five years after Tindale's martyrdom. It is a wonderful work. Its forty-seven revisers speak as one man, wisely embodying the best work of previous versions, chiefly the unrivalled rendering of Tindale, while it is so filled with the spirit and beauty of holiness that it might almost be called the Inspired Version. The Revised Version rendered necessary by the growth of knowledge, particularly of the text, had its origin in Convocation in 1870. Two companies of revisers were appointed, one for the Old Testament, and another for the New. The first result, the Revised New Testament, was published in May 1881. The Revised Old Testament in May 1885. This version should be in the hands of every

student of the Bible, not in place of the Authorised Version, but side by side with it. The older Version is far more beautiful in its choice of language, and dignity and ease of style, but the Revised Version supplies an accuracy of translation, and that too from a more trustworthy text, which cannot be dispensed with. Talking of Versions, we may draw attention to the fact that the Bible has been translated into a multitude of languages, practically into all the known languages of the world.

Before entering on a consideration of the Books of the New Testament, which we shall take mainly in their familiar order, as we did the Books of the Old Testament, it might be helpful to give some account of the interval that separates the last Books of the Old Testament from the first Books of the New. If one were to accept the traditional date of Daniel, the last Books of the Old Testament in point of date would be probably the Book of Malachi the prophet, and the historical Books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Nehemiah's second mission to Jerusalem was in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes (Nehemiah xiii. verse 6), *i.e.* 433 B.C. The prophet Malachi wrote probably not much later. Judæa was a Persian province at that time, and remained so till Alexander the Great conquered Darius, at the great Battle of Issus in 333 B.C. With Alexander's conquest a far-reaching change began, which was one of the most important providential preparations for Christianity, namely, the spread of the Greek influence and the Greek language over what afterwards became part of the Roman Empire, and especially among the Jewish race. After Issus, Alexander advanced to Tyre, which he took after a desperate resistance and a siege of seven months. He then proceeded against Jerusalem. He was met at Scopus by a train of Jewish priests in their robes, and a great multitude in white garments. Moved by the dignity of these representatives of a religious state governed by God, he treated Jerusalem leniently, and himself offered a sacrifice in the Temple.

The policy of Alexander was to bind together his whole vast Empire by the ties of Greek civilisation and language, and this policy was brought to bear on Palestine. After his early death in 323 B.C., the same policy was continued by his successors, and Greek influence flowed in on Jerusalem from its great centres, Antioch and Alexandria. Judæa fell first to the share of the Egyptian realm ruled by the Ptolemies, the successors of Alexander in this portion of his Empire. Large numbers of Jews were removed by Ptolemy Lagus to Alexandria and other cities of Egypt, where they prospered as colonists. There they adopted the Greek lan-

guage, and felt the influence of the Greek literature. But their hearts were still in Jerusalem, which they frequently visited, thus bringing the leavening influence of Greek civilisation to bear upon the Holy City.

The suzerainty of Egypt changed from time to time to the suzerainty of Syria, the high priest ruling Jerusalem and seeing to the payment of the twenty talents to the suzerain for the time being. Two parties divided Jerusalem between them, the old conservative Jewish party and the new Greek party. We may for convenience call the policies of these two parties, Judaism and Hellenism. In the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, 175-164 B.C., Syria being then suzerain, the Greek party at Jerusalem, which comprised most of the upper classes, procured the appointment of Jason as high priest by a gift of money to Antiochus. Jason had permission to set up a gymnasium in order to Hellenise the youth and to enrol the people of Jerusalem as citizens of Antioch (*i.e.*, to give them the rights of citizenship), and he actually sent three hundred pieces of silver to Tyre to provide a sacrifice to Hercules.

The object of the Greek party at Jerusalem now became openly the acceptance of the Greek religion by the nation, but when the doings of the next high priest, Menelaus, were known in the country parts, the people rose in the interests of the old Jewish religion. This opposition to Hellenism came from the Scribes and their disciples, the priesthood having gone over to an alliance with Heathenism. In this action of the Scribes we can see the influence of the Old Testament, the Bible as it then existed, especially of the Pentateuch. A party grew up, chiefly in the country parts, of pious men and women who studied the law and loved the old religion. They were called the Chasidim or Hasidim, that is, the pious.

The struggle at Jerusalem between the Greek and the Jewish party came to a head when Antiochus, for the second time, sacked Jerusalem, and deliberately set about the extirpation of the old Jewish religion. All Jewish worship was abolished by the Syrian king. An altar to Zeus was set up upon the great altar of burnt offering in the Temple, 'the abomination of desolation' referred to in Daniel, and the Jews were forced to join in heathen sacrifices and to eat swine's flesh. The Syrian officials went about the country to enforce the king's commands. The Chasidim chose death rather than surrender.

In the Apocryphal Books of the Maccabees we have a detailed account of the heroic way in which the Jews met this merciless persecution. One remarkable effect of the sufferings which the pious Jews endured, was the growth in brightness and strength of

the Messianic hope. At first they died like martyrs without resistance, but at last a leader was found in Mattathias, the head of a priestly family in the town of Modin in Judæa. He slew a Jew who was about to offer a heathen sacrifice, levelled the heathen altar, and fled with his sons to the mountains. Joined by others, he and his family began a religious war against the heathen oppressors. One of his sons was Judas, called 'the hammer' (that is probably the meaning of the word Maccabee), who became the leader of the patriots. Now began a great war between the vast Syrian armies sent to put down the revolt, and the little band of Jews who were fighting for religious liberty, or death. The Syrians advancing towards Jerusalem, which was held by a Syrian garrison, were defeated by Judas Maccabæus at Emmaus. Next year, Lysias, the Syrian general, came back to Judæa with another large army, and was met and defeated by Judas at Bethzur, 165 B.C., twenty miles south of Jerusalem, and forced to retreat to Antioch.

Judas now occupied Jerusalem, and while he sent troops to attack the Syrians in the citadel, restored the Temple worship after solemn purification of the holy place. After the death of Antiochus, Lysias returned to Jerusalem, and Judas with his little force was defeated by an immense Syrian army, and Jerusalem was besieged. Defence seemed hopeless; but Lysias, finding that Philip, who had been left guardian to the young king Antiochus the Fifth, was marching against him, offered to grant religious liberty to the Jews in return for their submission. The offer was accepted by the Chasidim, but not by Judas, who continued the struggle. The Syrians occupied Jerusalem, and Nicanor, with a large army, was sent against Judas by Demetrius the First, successor of young Antiochus. Judas defeated Nicanor near Beth-horon, and nailed his head and hand to the fortifications of Jerusalem. Judas now determined to crush out Hellenism completely and to restore the Jewish State. He sought foreign support, sending an embassy to Rome, with which he made an alliance, and the Roman republic threatened the Syrians with war unless they retired from Judæa. But before the Roman decree arrived, a fresh Syrian invasion overpowered Judas. His army was defeated and the Jewish leader was slain. So the great struggle ended. The main object of the Maccabæan revolt, religious liberty, was gained. And if the Jewish State passed under the suzerainty of Syria again, they were directly under the government of their own high priest. In 153 B.C. Jonathan, the brother of Judas Maccabæus, was acknowledged the high priest by the king of Syria. In 142 B.C. Simon, the brother of Jonathan, forced the Syrian troops to retire from the citadel, and in the

next year the whole Jewish nation declared Simon high priest, captain, and governor (1 Maccabees xiv. 27-47).

The Asmonæan or Maccabæan family retained the high priesthood, and in the year 65 B.C. the Romans, who Judas Maccabæus had invited so long before, arrived in Palestine represented by Scaurus, lieutenant of Pompey. Pompey himself followed the next year, and, enraged at the bad faith of one of the Jewish leaders, besieged Jerusalem and took it after three months' siege, 63 B.C. He acted with much moderation, and although he went into the Holy of Holies, he left the treasures of the Temple untouched. It was just eighty years since the independence of Judæa had been attained. And now the country came finally under the sway of Rome, Scaurus, Pompey's lieutenant, being left in charge of Judæa, as a part of Syria.

From the time of Judas Maccabæus, the Jews had held their own for nearly one hundred years. The national pride had grown with national success. The bitterness of now becoming a mere portion of the Roman province of Syria, under the orders of the Roman Pro-consul of that province, was extreme, and the people who had tasted the sweets of liberty were never able long to content themselves and live quietly under the rule of Rome. After the death of Pompey, Julius Cæsar gave to the Jews many privileges which Pompey had denied. He freed them from supporting Roman soldiers, reduced their tribute during the Sabbatical year, and gave them Joppa. The consequence was that the Jews most sincerely sorrowed for Cæsar's death, when he was assassinated 44 B.C. When Antony came to Antioch after the defeat of Brutus and Cassius at Philippi, 42 B.C., a deputation of Jews waited on him to accuse the sons of Antipater, Herod in particular. Antony, however, appointed Herod to a tetrarchy, from which he was driven by a revolt to seek help and redress at Rome. In the year 40 B.C. Herod, who had been appointed king by Antony and Octavius, went back to Palestine to claim his kingdom. When Herod died, after a period of thirty-seven years, he left his kingdom among his three sons, having obtained from Augustus during a visit to Rome the right of disposing of it. To Archelaus he left Judæa with the title of king. To Herod Antipas he left Galilee and Peræa with the title of tetrach. To Philip he left the north-east part of his kingdom with the title of tetrarch.

We have already closed our Old Testament, which we have learned to understand, to reverence, and to love. But before considering the main subject of the New Testament, which is the coming of Christ to the world—or, in other words, the Incarnation of

God in Man—we must trace out, as far as so mysterious a subject can be followed up, the preparation for that Incarnation, the education of the world to receive the coming of Christ.

Man has had, and still has, many religions, all apparently originating in a primitive revelation interpreted by the distinctive human faculty for perceiving the Divine Presence sometimes called spiritual sight. This faculty may well have wakened into life under the touch of God working through the stimulus of natural phenomena, such as the inspiring sight of the dawn, which, according to Max Müller, first gave life in man to the idea of worship as men gazed on the great sight and felt it to be the Infinite made visible. Still, all attempts to trace the beginnings of religion are unsatisfactory, for our own nature remains a mystery, and a mystery, too, though a certainty like our own existence, is man's relation to the mystery of mysteries—God. It is true wisdom to remember that our finite minds cannot comprehend the Infinite Being, and the words of the Psalmist are as true to-day as when they were first uttered: 'Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. It is high. I cannot attain unto it.'

Still, if we cannot know fully the Infinite God we can know Him in part; we can see in a mirror dimly (the mirror of nature and human life) the vision of the Most High, and can look forward with faith and hope to seeing Him face to face hereafter. The study in recent years of the many religions of the ancient world points to the fact that all men in some degree are seekers after God, and that their seeking is met by a progressive Revelation through human experience which God seems to give in exact measure to man's capacity to receive it—a capacity which is weakened by sin and strengthened by righteousness in accordance with our Lord's illuminating saying: 'Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.' That there was a real seeking after God in the ancient religions, and that some knowledge, however imperfect, rewarded that seeking; that the Revelation to the Jews was not an isolated experience but a part of a world-wide movement towards God which reached its highest in Judaism with its unparalleled continuity of inspiration and marvellous expectation of the coming of the Messiah—that is, of the Incarnation of God in Man—is a widely accepted view which has its foundations in Holy Scripture. It is, for example, St. Paul's view. He regarded Christianity as the crown and completion of all religions, for which all other religions were only a preparation—the imperfect visions of truth they contained being, like the first grey light of dawn, a growing promise of the

future coming of the perfect day. To this effect were his words at Athens, when he pointed to the religious heathen as feeling after an unknown God: 'Whom, therefore, ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.' He went on to base his appeal to the Athenians on the great foundation truth expressed by two of their Stoic poets—Aratus and Cleomenes, 'for we are also his offspring,' thus giving an illustration of the providential preparation for the Revelation of the Father in Christ which is a central part of the Gospel. He found such a preparation among the cultivated Epicureans and Stoics, who heard him on Mars Hill. He found it also among the rude nature-worshippers at Lystra. He held, as he taught at Lystra, that God had never left himself without witness, and that even Natural Religion had given men some knowledge of God's loving-kindness, and so prepared them for the full Revelation in Christ that God is love.

Still more definite are the opening words of the Epistle to the Hebrews: 'God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.'

That was the great event for which its gradually developing religious consciousness was intended to prepare the human race. That was the predestined completion and crown of the mysterious and manifold evolution of religion in the great religions of the past. 'He that should come' came and satisfied fully in His Divine offering up of Himself to God all the aspirations of the many-thoughted mind of man which separately and fragmentarily had found expression in other religions, but in Christianity found expression in perfect unison and rounded completeness. Thus the ancient religions of the world prepared mankind for the Advent. Stimulating the longings for a fuller Revelation they developed the capacity to receive it when it came.

The supreme example of this preparation was the progressive Revelation granted to the Hebrews, which we need only touch upon here as we have read so much about it in the Old Testament. It may be added that the Jewish Dispersion supplied favourable seed-plots throughout the Roman Empire for the growth of the Christian Church in the nucleus of Jews and proselytes established in ever considerable city, and equipped for the right ordering of a common religious and moral life which the inspired library of the Old Testament. But while the disciplining of the Jews by the teaching of Prophet and Psalmist and Lawgiver was the chief preparation, and supplied the favourable spiritual atmosphere not only in Pales-

tine but throughout the Roman world in which the religion of the Incarnation could live and grow, the preparation of the world for Christ by other ancient religions must not be forgotten.

One of these was the Assyro-Babylonian religion. The deep sense of sin, the consciousness of God's transcendent majesty, and the longing for God's forgiveness which labours of archæologists have unearthed in the tablet-books of this religion, reveal a very real seeking after God, a valuable preparation towards finding God fully and perfectly in Christ. A further preparation may be found in a Divine Mediator between God and man—Marduk or Mero-dach, 'the Holy Son,' as he was called, the Redeemer of fallen man, a wonderful foreshadowing of the historical Messiah among the race out of which, be it remembered, Abraham came. Another example of this world-wide preparation for the Advent was the ancient Egyptian religion, in which a very elevated moral teaching had issued in the idea of a final Judgment, at which every one would have to give account of his words as well as his deeds. More wonderful even than the anticipation of Christ in Assyrian Mero-dach was the similar anticipation in Egyptian Osiris, who lived on earth to befriend man; who died and rose again, the firstfruits of the grave; whose earthly life was a model for mankind, the mystic union with whom was the aspiration of every man of piety; who was the ruler of the world of the dead, and the merciful Judge before whom all must appear. We can only find space to mention here the Persian religion and its great teacher, Zoroaster, saying a word, however, about Mithraism, the kindred worship of Mithras, the old Aryan god of light, the personification of the sun, the Mediator between man and the unknown God, whose worship was brought to Rome by some of Pompey's prisoners, where it became extremely popular, especially in the Roman army, and spread even to distant Britain, and till the fourth century held its own against Christianity. The close resemblances of Mithraism to the Christian faith, its highly organized priesthood and sacramental system, give it a claim to be a part of the providential preparation for the religion of Christ which took its place.

The religions of Greece and Rome played their part, too, in this universal preparation; and it may be remembered that Socrates, the greatest personality of his time, as represented by Plato in the 'Laws,' saw only one hope for man to escape from the bondage of a specially degrading sin—namely, the coming of some Divine Person to brand that sin authoritatively as shameful, and give a fresh inspiration to the higher life—a hope which, centuries after the death of Socrates, was marvellously realised in Jesus Christ. It may be

said here that the Greek religion was twofold—or, rather, that there were two religions that existed side by side: the popular religion of the masses, with its pantheon of deities of very loose morality, with their magnificent temples and their statues and their offerings; and the spiritual religion—the religion of the chosen few based on the unity and spirituality of God, a belief standing at the centre of the great Eleusinian mysteries, and mentioned as far back as the seventh century B.C. These mysteries did much to educate and prepare the minds of the initiated to receive the full Revelation of God in Christ.

This feeling after God and partially finding Him which is to be found in more or less degree in all religions is everywhere to be regarded as a preparation for Christ, whether it be found in the initiated ones of the Eleusinian mysteries or in great thinkers like Plato or Aristotle, or in the fitful gleams of natural religion or spiritual intuition in the poets. Death was held to be a gain, not an evil, by the initiated at Eleusis, and the resurrection of the gods as represented at the celebration of the mysteries encouraged the hopes of thousands of seeking souls who asked for some comforting knowledge from the unseen world. Higher views of the gods of Olympus developed side by side with the crude, popular view, and the myths, particularly the myth of Demeter, the earth-goddess and her daughter, Persephone, which was at the foundation of the Eleusinian mysteries, was spiritualised and applied to the destiny of the soul in the unseen world. The myths of Plato, again—the story of Er, the son of Arminius, in particular—convey profound spiritual truths, and were a part of the preparation for Christianity as the fasting, purification, and sacramental meal at the mysteries at Eleusis were a helpful preparation for the great Christian sacrament. Gratitude to the gods was the chief sentiment fostered by the many joyous festivals of the Greek religion, and must have had some effect in preparing the minds of the peoples of the Roman Empire for the fuller revelation of the joyousness and thankfulness of primitive Christianity. The Roman religion was largely a State affair, and was characterised by externality and formality. Having little or no mythology of its own, it borrowed largely from the Greek. Reverence and obedience were the chief virtues inculcated, and this attitude towards the gods was to some limited extent a preparation for the salutary discipline of the organized Christian Church.

Furthermore, a part in this preparation, a foreshadowing of Christ, like the anticipation of Christ in Merodach or Osiris, was played among our ancestors in the Teutonic branch of the Aryan

race by Baldur, the god of light, who stood for all that was gentle and pure and good to his Northern worshippers, to whom he was known as Baldur the White, and when Baldur's worshippers received Christianity the new object of their worship was called the White Christ. But among these old Teutons probably the most important preparation for Christianity was the high ideal of morals, the high estimation in which bravery, manliness, uprightness, and purity were held, and the reverence shown to the aged and to women and children, together with a well-established and elevated standard of self-respect. A high ethical ideal, in short, prepared these Northern Teutons to accept Christ, in whom that dimly shadowed ideal of perfect courage and perfect goodness was found to be realised. The shadowy lineaments of divinity in the White Baldur prepared them for the radiant features of the White Christ, in whom the transfiguration of humanity into something higher than human visibly took place—what the Apostle calls 'the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.'

All these religions, and many more, have passed away. They were 'not that Light,' but were 'sent to bear witness of that Light.' But there are other ancient religions, long-established before Christ came, which still seek to satisfy the needs of their many millions of adherents. Such is Hinduism, with its anticipations of the Incarnation, according to which the god Vishnu is reported to come down in answer to prayer, and to set things right on earth. Such is Buddhism, which arose in Northern India in the fifth century before Christ, its founder, Buddha (*i.e.*, one freed from existence by knowledge of truth), being probably a real personage, Prince Siddhartha, the greatest perhaps of the sons of God after the Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, whose Sonship is altogether unique and supreme. The worship of so sweet and self-renouncing a soul as Buddha must have done something to prepare the minds of his votaries for Christ. Such, again, is Confucianism, which arose in China centuries before Christ, its founder being Confucius (Kung-fu-tsze—that is, the Master Kung), a system of practical morals rather than of religious aspirations, but a teaching which, with that of Lao-tsze (Taoism), who flourished about the same date as Confucius, still shares with Buddhism the spiritual rule of the vast population of China.

All these religious systems were fully established centuries before the coming of Christ. Though their founders were great and good men, these religions have failed to supply the growing needs of humanity, and have yielded to the law of decay, and China's religion to-day is practically materialism mixed with a low form of supersti-

tion, a dread of swarming evil spirits which depresses and degrades human life, while Buddhism has become practical atheism—a religion of despairing pessimism in no way satisfying the needs and hopes of its many-millions flock; so too popular Hinduism, originally the pure worship of elementary powers, has degenerated into a grotesque polytheism (Hanuman, the monkey-god; Ganesh, the elephant-god, are among the divinities) which has no elevating effect on the moral life, though the Brahmo-Somaj (Church of the Only God) Movement, with its noble theism, shows the aspiration towards religious reform in India.

We have seen that many ancient religions have passed away utterly, and other ancient religions like Buddhism, Hinduism, and Confucianism are more or less decadent or moribund. All have failed completely to supply the needs and elevate the lives of their adherents.

Christianity is entirely unlike these decaying cults, inasmuch as it is not only infinitely superior to any of them, but it contains in itself the principle of perpetual progress, the principle of undying vitality. In Christianity the Infinite Being reveals Himself to finite beings in terms of the finite. Thus it is at once intelligible to man, and able to supply all his needs from a source of light and love which is absolutely inexhaustible. To the Christian the whole universe and all that is in it is a manifestation of God reaching its highest in the perfect and Divine humanity of Christ. Higher manifestation there cannot be, for in the words of Christ, 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father,' All the essentials of religion, isolated fragments of which are found in other religions, are found combined in their full completeness in Christianity. Primitive Christianity, speaking through St. Paul, already saw the Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ completed in all mankind, viewed as one colossal being, the Catholic or universal Church, comprehending all the inhabitants of the world as depicted in one body, with Christ as Head, 'till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect (R.V. full grown) man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ' (Ephesians iv. verse 13).

This building-up of the body of Christ till it consists of all mankind was an idea constantly before St. Paul's eyes in the first century, when the building-up had only begun, and it ought to be continually before our eyes in the twentieth century, when the building-up is far advanced towards completion. St. Paul's idea gives the true note of finality to Christianity. When its object is attained, when its work is completed, there will be no more work left to do.

Thus all other religions are a preparation for it, for all other religions pass away, and Christianity, as was pre-ordained by God, takes their place. This distinguishing characteristic of Christianity is written in large letters across the history of nineteen centuries, and never larger than on the history that is being made to-day.

But the expectation of that supreme coming of God to man in the coming of Christ, though the chief, was not the only preparation for that coming. The Roman Empire itself, the establishment of which was accomplished by Augustus, was a great and effective preparation for the rapid acceptance of the religion of the Incarnation, which offered to all men in Christ union in a universal brotherhood under the universal fatherhood of God. The idea of the universal union of humanity had begun, as we have seen, with Alexander's Empire. In the Roman Empire a vaster unity was effected, which comprehended the more civilised portions of three continents—Asia, Africa, and Europe—and made the Mediterranean Sea a Roman lake, while the Pax Romana, or internal peace of the Empire, was maintained not only by Roman arms, but more effectively by the justice of Roman government and Roman law, which welded together in common contentment the subject-peoples of the provinces. That contentment was so deep-seated that the nation spontaneously saluted Augustus, as the maker of universal prosperity and universal happiness, by the proud title of the Father of his country, a title which was afterwards solemnly and unanimously conferred by the Senate in B.C. 2—that is, a few years after our Lord's birth, according to the now generally accepted chronology. The Roman Empire, too, was a fit cradle for the infancy of a new religion, for it had learned to tolerate the religions of subject-peoples even in the metropolis, until the inevitable struggle between the universal or Catholic Church and the universal Empire began. Thus, at the time of our Lord's birth, peace and contentment reigned over the gigantic Empire in which so many nations had been to some extent united and trained to the idea of a universal humanity under the influence of Roman law.

Now we have arrived at the time of Our Lord's birth into this world. The land appointed by Our Heavenly Father for the birth of the long-expected Messiah was the very same land we have been reading about all the while in the Old Testament, the land we know as Palestine. No scattered pastoral population inhabited Palestine at the time of Our Lord's birth. The cities were numerous in Galilee as well as in Judæa, and full of Greeks as well as Jews. The people spoke two languages, Aramaic and Greek. It is evident that Greek was exceedingly well known, for nearly all Our Lord's

quotations from the Old Testament are made from the Greek Version. The great expense of Hebrew manuscripts was an additional reason for using the Greek Bible, which was comparatively cheap.

Every available inch of ground in this country was carefully cultivated. The population was particularly dense round the Lake of Galilee, where there were two hundred villages and three walled cities. Boats employed in trade and fishing thronged the lake. The life of this population, actively engaged in agriculture or trade, was seriously occupied with religion. The Pharisees, that is, the Separatists, were the distinctively religious party. They were scrupulously careful about the external observances of religion. But their hard, self-righteous spirit had little in common with the God of Love. They were the dominant party at Jerusalem. The Scribes, or Students of the Law, were closely connected with the Pharisees. They had, to a great extent, taken the place of the Priests, and they took the upper hand in Galilee, as the Pharisees did in Jerusalem. The Sadducees were members of priestly families, of aristocratic race, and kept the high priesthood in their own hands, and often succeeded in leading the Pharisee majority in the Sanhedrin. Religion was to the Sadducees a secondary matter, their main object being worldly position and power.

In our Lord's time, religion was in a bad way in Jerusalem, under the combined influence of Scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees, yet there existed in country parts a considerable number of pious people, who studied the Scriptures devotionally, and lived deeply religious lives. Such were Joseph and Mary, Zacharias and Elizabeth, Simeon and Anna. These were the best product of the study of the Jewish Bible, and from similar material Christ's disciples were chosen and the Christian Church was formed. The general Expectation of the Messiah, who was to establish God's Kingdom on the earth, a Kingdom however that was to be formed exclusively of Jews, was one of the most striking characteristics of the life of Palestine at that time.

We have said something already about the long and gradual growth of this Expectation, developed and fostered by the utterances of the Prophets from Isaiah to Malachi. But the erroneous view that it was to be an earthly kingdom and to consist solely of Jews had been intensified by the temporary realisation which had been reached through the national greatness under Judas Macabæus. Thus, although the words of the Book of Daniel were remembered as a prophecy of the Messianic Kingdom, the universal nature of that Kingdom of God was forgotten, and a narrower national view took its place. A proud nation, which had by itself

broken the power of Syria in the comparatively recent days of Antiochus Epiphanes, could ill brook the iron hand of Rome, and still less the bitter contempt for the Jew, which the Roman official made no attempt to conceal.

The vanguard which headed the great body of the people eager to be delivered from Roman rule was known as the Zealots. One of this party, Simon the Zealot, was an Apostle of our Lord, and very likely joined Him with the idea that He would set up the standard of national independence and drive out the Romans (Matthew x. verse 4; Mark iii. verse 18; Luke vi. verse 15; Acts i. verse 13). But while the imagination of the mass of the people was entirely captured by this material conception of the Messianic Kingdom, others, the poor in spirit, had attained by a pious life to the blessedness of spiritual insight, by which they perceived God's salvation to be a spiritual thing. Such were the two mentioned in Luke ii. verses 25-38.

Others there were like a flock waiting for a shepherd to lead them into green pastures, with a dim, unconscious yearning of suffering helplessness; the sick and the maimed, the halt and the blind, were waiting for some help from on high, as the palsied man did for the troubling of the water. Multitudes of such sufferers needed help, but none knew that the Divine Helper was drawing near. Where was the Messianic Kingdom? Where was the looked-for Messiah? How long He seemed to tarry! How many thirsting and hungering souls were aching with deferred hope and unsatisfied longing! Almighty God, am I abandoned? Was I created in Thine Image? Is this what life means? Why am I here? Whither am I going? Oh, the sighs and groans and tears and sorrows that must have found their way on high! 'Be not afraid. Unto us is born a Saviour.' The answer comes back: 'Only believe.'

And what about this Saviour of the World? Where do we find Him? How can we serve Him? At once let us go to our New Testament, and hear the joyful news.

As a whole the New Testament—that is, the New Covenant—is far shorter than the Old Testament, but it is far more important, for it records the supreme revelation of God in Jesus Christ. It tells us the story of our Blessed Lord's life on earth. It gives us in His own words His Divine teaching. It puts before us His life as our example to follow which must ever be the aim of our keenest and hardest endeavours.

To begin with, on opening our New Testament, the names of four men arrest our immediate attention: these are the names of

the four Evangelists. 'Evangel' is taken from a word which means 'good news' in Greek. 'Gospel' stands for Evangel in English, and and comes from the Anglo-Saxon 'Godspell,' meaning 'God-story.' As you may observe, a part of the word 'Evangel' is 'angel'—a messenger sent by God to tell us tidings which He desires us to know. The good tidings are of God in Jesus Christ reconciling the world to Himself. The names of the Evangelists are Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, each of whom is honoured with the prefix of Saint. All four accounts are inspired by God, but each is marked by the differing personality and purpose of its writer. The Gospel according to St. Matthew probably represents the Gospel as it was taught by St. Matthew, and it was addressed especially to Jews, and sought to convince them that Jesus was their long-looked-for Messiah. To St. Matthew, as to St. Mark and St. Luke, Jesus is both the Messiah and the Redeemer of mankind.

The writings of St. Matthew take for granted the Jewish belief in the Old Testament. He quotes the Old Testament specially for the identification of Jesus with the Messiah. Also he gives prominence to Christ's idea of the Kingdom of Heaven and His Gospel, as well as to the importance of recognising Jesus to be the Messianic King. The service of the kingdom consists in conduct, and in the last day man is judged by his conduct, as is shown in the great parable of the Last Judgment in Matthew xxv. He puts special stress on the Parables of the Kingdom, such as the Sower, the Wheat and the Tares, the Mustard Seed, the Leaven, the Hidden Treasure, the Pearl of Great Price, the Net. He also lays special stress on the laws of the Kingdom of God, in what we call the Sermon on the Mount. The Gospel according to St. Matthew was written probably shortly before A.D. 70. The name Matthew signifies 'gift of God.' The special value of this Gospel is that it gives the fullest record of our Lord's sayings.

Our second Gospel is St. Mark's. This Gospel is seen by internal evidence to be the earliest. It is the basis of the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke. When we compare it with them, we find nearly the whole of St. Mark either in St. Matthew or in St. Luke, and the larger part in both. The original source of St. Mark's Gospel is believed, for excellent reasons, to have been St. Peter. Papias assures us that St. Mark wrote down the words and acts of our Saviour as St. Peter delivered them in his preaching, and the second Gospel may be fairly called—as it was in the early centuries of Christianity—'the Memories of Peter.' When we examine the Gospel itself we find that its contents are evidently the record of an eye-witness, often specially to be attributed to St.

Peter, as the account of the Transfiguration and the raising of Jairus's daughter, and thus bear out the primitive tradition. We are told that St. Mark was with St. Paul when he returned to Antioch with Barnabas. There he met Manaen, Herod's foster brother, from whom, no doubt, was obtained the striking account, with all its graphic details, of how Herod was worked upon by the daughter of Herodias and entrapped in the meshes of his own rash promise, till he ordered the murder of John the Baptist, and the head of the great Prophet was presented in a dish to the daughter of vindictive Herodias. St. Mark chronicles our Lord's actions rather than His words. St. Mark wrote for Roman readers. Witness his many Latinisms, and his very full explanations of Jewish words and customs. Comparatively few of our Lord's sayings are recorded, and only four of the parables. The interest centres in Jesus Himself, in His feelings as well as in His doings.

St. Luke was a Gentile Christian, a cultivated man who wrote good Greek, and was a critical and able historian. The date of his Gospel is probably not later than A.D. 80, and may be A.D. 61, during St. Paul's imprisonment in Rome. He accompanied St. Paul on his missionary journeys; and that companionship enabled him to write the Acts of the Apostles, and helped to supply him with materials for his Gospel when at Cæsarea and Jerusalem; for we know that St. Paul and St. Luke were together during St. Paul's imprisonment at Cæsarea, and afterwards at Rome. We know little about St. Luke's own life. He is too modest to mention himself. He addresses his Gospel, as his later work, the Acts, to a friend, Theophilus, a fellow Christian, addressed as 'most excellent,' a title which indicates a Roman of high rank—in fact, probably one of the knights. St. Luke represents Christ specially as the Saviour of all mankind, not merely as the Messiah of the Jews. St. Luke, with the thoughtfulness and sympathy of a humane physician, dwells on the fact that Jesus was the compassionate Healer of all suffering and illness, bringing out strongly Christ's human character. The labour that St. Luke spent in compiling his Gospel, which is mentioned in his preface, is evidenced by the fact that perhaps half his book consists of fresh matter, which he does not share with the other Evangelists. Not only does he supply a priceless list of parables not recorded elsewhere, headed by the greatest of all the parables, the Prodigal Son, and containing also the great parable of the Good Samaritan, but besides several miracles peculiar to himself, he preserves in his first two chapters the story of our Lord's Conception and Birth, as told from the Blessed Virgin's point of view, the weeping over Jerusalem, the blood-sweat in Gethsemane,

the trial by Herod, the last words to the women of Jerusalem, the conversion of the penitent thief and the words to him from the Cross, the first words and the last words from the Cross, the appearance at Emmaus, the fullest account of the appearance in the Upper Room the evening of the Resurrection. He seems to have been in touch, probably when he was with St. Paul at Jerusalem, with our Lord's mother, and with Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward. The feeling with which women of all classes regarded our Lord is dwelt on with special sympathy by St. Luke; for instance, he alone records the lament of the women of Jerusalem as our Lord was led away to be crucified and our Lord's words to them.

St. Luke's Gospel has, not without reason, been called 'The Gospel of Womanhood.' We owe St. Luke a great debt of gratitude for the priceless record which he alone has preserved, the most beautiful of the parables, the Magnificat, the Nunc Dimittis, the Benedictus, the story of the Annunciation; and he and St. Mark alone record the Ascension. St. Luke's is the most human-hearted of the Gospels, the most sympathetic, and so he occupies himself specially with the ministry of women. Whether St. Luke personally knew our Lord during His earthly ministry we are not told, but in the wonderful account of the appearance at Emmaus the graphic details of the eye-witness are manifest, and it has been conjectured that one of the two disciples was Luke himself.

The fourth Evangelist, St. John, was our Lord's closest friend and most inseparable companion, 'the disciple whom Jesus loved.' As one of the inner circle of three he was with our Lord at the raising of Jairus' daughter, at the Transfiguration, during the bloody sweat at Gethsemane, and kept close to Him in the High Priest's palace and saw Him condemned for blasphemy by the Sanhedrin and buffeted and contemptuously ill-used by them afterwards. Finally, he saw Him nailed to the Cross, and was chosen to receive the dying bequest of his Lord's mother that he might be to her as a son. He was, when young, a man of such fiery and impetuous nature that our Lord named him and his brother 'Sons of thunder.' Later, Love was the keynote of the teaching of this 'Apostle of Love.' The other Gospels are true photographs of our Lord as He walked on earth. St. John's is a great portrait painted by one to whom the abysmal depths of the Divine Personality were opened by the key of intense sympathy and love.

Tradition tells us he was the last of the twelve Apostles to die, and he is believed to have died at Ephesus not many years after the close of the first century. His Gospel is supplementary, and sup-

plies what is wanting in the other Gospels, which he was able to do, as this Gospel was written very much later, probably about the year 90 or 95 A.D. His is the most spiritual Gospel—a masterpiece of mysticism. The purpose of the contents of his Gospel is, in his own words: 'But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.'

He records our Lord's conversations and discourses, especially those at the closing of His ministry, with a fulness that is marvellous, considering the length of time before they were written down. The accuracy of his local colour in describing life in Palestine, and the vividness of his word-pictures of our Lord's mighty works, plainly betoken an eye-witness. St. John represents the Saviour to us in His Godhead. He had a grasp of the deep mystery of His Lord's Deity not approached by any of the other Evangelists. He also understood more completely than the rest the meaning of the Lord's discourses, and of the miracles, which he calls signs. St. John lays stress on the necessity of a new birth. St. John's insight into our Lord's character is unique. Unique, too, is his power of expressing the deepest thoughts in the simplest words. This power distinguishes the Epistles, as well as the Gospel that bears his name—*e.g.*, in the Epistles, 'God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him;' in the Gospel, 'I and the Father are one' (R.V.), 'Before Abraham was, I am,' 'He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father,' 'I am the Resurrection and the Life.' Of the Apostle's deep-thoughted simplicity it may be said the style is the man himself, and such a personality made him his Lord's best interpreter.

St. John tells us in the Book of the Revelation that he was banished to Patmos, an island in the Ægean, where he received the Revelation. Later he ruled the Church at Ephesus. A touching story is related of him. Jerome tells us how, in his extreme old age, when unable to preach, he used to be carried into church on a litter, and instead of a sermon used to address the congregation in these words: 'Little children, love one another.' When some of the people objected, asking why he kept repeating the same thing, he replied: 'Because it is the Lord's command. If only that is done, it is enough.'

Another story is to be found in Cassian. It shows that the great Apostle of Love did not content himself with loving men only, but that his love reached to and embraced the humblest animal. He used, says Cassian, to play with a tame partridge in his old age, and when blamed for this as unbecoming frivolity, he replied: 'The

bow cannot be always bent.' An anecdote which illustrates the strength of his love of souls is told by Clement of Alexandria. It tells how he went into an ill-famed forest to win back a disciple who had relapsed and become one of a body of bandits there. The whole vehemence of character which had wished to call down fire on the inhospitable Samaritans, and had called forth his Lord's rebuke, showed itself in his old age, when, according to the story, he refused to remain under the same roof with the heretic Cerinthus. Of St. John's theology a few words may here be said. That theology may be summed up in three sayings, which are very simple in language, very profound in thought: 'God is spirit' (not 'a spirit,' as in A.V.), 'God is light,' 'God is love.'

As we have seen, the New Testament begins with the four Gospels. The first three—Matthew, Mark, and Luke, known as the Synoptics—with their general photographic view of the deeds and words of Jesus, are supplemented by the more profound study of St. John, which deals with the heresies that had arisen by the time this latest Gospel was written by the effective method of setting forth in many ways the true doctrine of the Divine Person. Thus, the pre-existence is affirmed in the opening lines: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.' Nor is it only in such passages as this that the Divinity of our Lord is revealed. Their intellectual statement of the high doctrine of the Incarnation is supported by St. John's simple records of the sacred humanity that serve to life the veil from the indwelling Deity. An example of this is the treatment of the story of the raising of Lazarus, which is peculiar to St. John. A still more remarkable passage of another kind, by which the veil is taken away from that Holy of Holies of our Lord's inmost soul, where He holds communion with the Father, is our Lord's High Priestly prayer after the institution of the Great Sacrament, and shortly before He went forth with His disciples to Gethsemane to the agony which was to usher in the supreme sacrifice of the Cross to which He consecrated Himself at once as sacrifice and sacrificing priest in those self-revealing words beginning: 'Father, the hour is come; glorify the Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they may know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And

now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.' The purpose of St. John's Gospel is the purpose of the whole New Testament—namely, to inspire such living faith in Christ in his readers that it may issue in Christ-like life in their thoughts, words, and deeds in the whole of their activity, internal as well as external.

The central figure of St. John's Gospel is also the central figure, the supreme subject, of the New Testament, our Blessed Lord Himself—the ultimate purpose of the whole universe, in whom the many-centuried evolution of life finds its destined fulfilment, in whom dwelt the fulness of the God-head, the 'Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,' to use the pregnant and inspiring words of St. John in his book of The Revelation.

The old creation is the subject of the first words of the Old Testament, the first words of the Book of Genesis: 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.' The new creation is the subject of the first words of St. John's Gospel: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men.' The whole of this marvellous preface to the fourth Gospel, of which we have given some of the opening words, is the most profound expression, even in Holy Scripture, of the central doctrine of the Incarnation, the revelation or unveiling to the mind of man of all that he needs and can receive of the knowledge of the infinite mystery of the being of God. Thus this preface to the fourth Gospel may be regarded as the proper preface to the whole New Testament, which is best understood in the far-reaching light of its illuminating words.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE GOSPELS (THE ANNUNCIATION AND THE NATIVITY).

IN the first chapter of St. Luke, verses 26 and 27, we read: 'And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin . . . and the virgin's name was Mary,' whose parents, according to apocryphal accounts, were Joachim and Anna.

We have at this place another beautiful picture to look at. The subject is that about which we are reading—the Annunciation. This means, an announcement of news in general, and Gabriel's message from God to the Blessed Virgin Mary in particular.

The picture is by our much-beloved Fra Angelico. The Virgin Mary was probably at this supreme moment of her destiny in her parents' house. We love to think that God's beautiful firmament was not shut out, so that Gabriel, in his downward flight from heaven, could easily reach the Holy Virgin praying within or sitting in the portico of her dwelling, as the painter represents her, enjoying on this memorable occasion God's invigorating fresh air, scented with perfume from the blossoming shrubs and opening flowers.

We continue reading in the first chapter of St. Luke how the angel came to her, and addressed this humble-minded maiden, who regarded the possibility of being chosen to be the mother of the Messiah as something too good to be true. St. Luke i. verse 28: 'Hail' (this means, all be well with thee), said the angel, 'thou that art highly favoured (margin R.V. endued with grace), the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.' This angelic salutation came as an overwhelming honour to one of such deep piety as Mary. Therefore we can readily understand that when Mary saw the angel Gabriel, 'she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of his father David: and he

shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end' (verses 29-33).

Here we have God's own messenger Gabriel, the same angel we remember as appearing to Daniel, bringing God's own message of promise. Nothing is left in doubt. God promises. God fulfills. Mary asked, 'How shall this be?' Gabriel replies: 'The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the 'Son of God.' ('That which is to be born shall be called holy, the Son of God.'—R.V.)

I want to draw attention to the golden rays coming from the sky straight to Mary. God on high is sending down His Holy Spirit, His Holy Ghost, to the Blessed Virgin, just as God in His mercy sends down His beneficent sunbeams in order to quicken into life all His expectant nature-world. In other words, these golden rays symbolise God's Holy Spirit, God's Very Presence with His humble handmaid to strengthen and support her to do her part in all the wonderful things which were appointed for her.

In many other of our beloved Italian pictures we see the Holy Ghost represented as a pure white dove sent down with a message of love. We are told in the Gospel according to St. Matthew that Christ saw the heavens open and this holy dove descending on Him at His baptism, which was also seen of John the Baptist on the same occasion.

The words, 'The power of the Highest shall overshadow thee,' remind us that God's presence is symbolised by such figures as the glory-cloud at the Transfiguration and the Shekinah in the Temple.

In St. John's Gospel xx. verse 22, we read: 'He (Jesus) breathed on them (His disciples), and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.' Thus we see the Holy Ghost proceeds from Him whose birth on earth was brought about by the same Holy Power which united humanity to God then and does so now.

We are meant to pray earnestly for the Holy Ghost to come to us, and we are moreover expected to tune our lives so as to be in harmony with the Divine Keynote.

To remove Mary's difficulties, Gabriel unasked gave a sign: 'And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible' (R.V.: 'For no word from God shall be void of power')—(Luke i. 36, 37).

Oh! the wonder of these words, 'with God nothing shall be impossible.' Oh! the untold blessedness of these words. Oh! the inexpressible consolation of these words. Do they not help us to

understand everything? God the Creator Himself reminds us through our experience of His working in the physical, as well as in the spiritual world, that nothing with Him is impossible. All our perplexities can be made to pass; nay, all our doubts are meant to be overcome. We are bidden to believe, and to be faithful unto Him. Then all is well with us.

With humility and faith Mary accepted the highest destiny that ever was granted by God to any woman, fully conscious of the misunderstandings which it involved. 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.' This was the sacred moment when the will of the holiest of women accepted by free choice the will of Almighty God, and the Incarnation took place.

This attitude of the Holy Virgin, her absolute acceptance of God's Holy Will, her high conception of duty, and her unbounded faith, show it was 'Hail' indeed with her. This sublime fact in the Gospel history stands out for all ages as a thing apart. Blessed in truth was Mary among women. 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word,' are familiar words. We are apt to forget the greatness of their significance. The Annunciation certainly took place because it was something very important, and was recorded for the same reason. What was the purpose of the announcement? Evidently the free consent of the Holy Virgin's will to God's will was made possible by the Annunciation. In this great miracle, as in other miracles of the Gospels, the acceptance of God's will by the human will was required. This full acceptance is what is elsewhere called Faith. Our Lord always required it in order to work miracles. Wonderful to say, for the accomplishment of this greatest of miracles, which was to bring Salvation in the Person of the Saviour to all mankind, the consent of this humble Galilean maiden was required. Without her consent the Incarnation would not have taken place as it did.

We are told that 'Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda; and entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth. . . . And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me that the mother of my Lord (*i.e.*, the Messiah) should come to me' (verses 39-43). Elisabeth continued that she too was a happy woman, because the Lord had told her that she also was going to have a little child. Elisabeth went on to declare that 'Blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of

those things which were told her from the Lord' (verse 45), (or 'believed that there shall be'—R.M.).

The Lord never disappoints a single soul that trusts Him. Mary now speaks the beautiful words of the Magnificat, full of holy joy and thankfulness. St. Luke i. verses 46-55: 'My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is His name. And His mercy is on them that fear Him from generation to generation. He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away. He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; as he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.'

We spoke awhile ago about the blessed Virgin visiting Zacharias and Elisabeth, and we want to know who these kind friends of hers were that showed her such true-hearted sympathy. Once more it is St. Luke who tells us. Let us first read a very important passage in its entirety, just as we find it recorded in chapter i. verses 1-4. The contents are of such vital importance that we cannot afford to lose one word of it. These words are: 'Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; it seemed good to me (Luke) also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus' (this we remember was a friend of St. Luke, a Roman of equestrian rank whom we have already spoken about), 'that thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed' (*i.e.*, catechised as a candidate for baptism).

This is the introduction of St. Luke's Gospel, of the account of the Annunciation which we have already given, as well as of the rest of the book. St. Luke here goes on to tell his friend, and at the same time he tells us in this very day of grace of Our Lord, 1911, that during King Herod's reign (who was reigning when Christ was born) there was a certain priest called Zacharias. He had a wife called Elisabeth, who was of the daughters of Aaron. Zacharias and Elisabeth 'were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.'

St. Luke i. verse 7: 'And they had no child And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course according to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.' The incense was offered by the priest while alone within the Temple, while the other worshippers, priests, and people were outside in the courts of the Temple. This burning of incense, which was done daily, at dawn and eve, was an outward sign of homage to God. A sweet-smelling perfume came forth from the vessel as it was swung, the smoke rose, a sort of visible symbol of the invisible prayers which ascended to God.

'And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense. And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John (*i.e.*, Jehovah is gracious). And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.'

We thus see that God had a special message for this child John to deliver, as well as important things for him to do. When Zacharias heard what the angel Gabriel said, instead of accepting all in faith, he began questioning him. This was wrong. The angel said (verse 19): 'I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings.' Gabriel and Michael are the only two angels named both in the Old Testament and in the New. It was not right for Zacharias to doubt the words of God's own messenger. Gabriel went on to say: 'And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.'

In the meanwhile all the people were waiting for Zacharias in the outer court of the Temple, 'and marvelled that he tarried so long in the temple. And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless' (verses 21, 22).

The child was in due time born. All the cousins and neighbours heard and saw that the Lord had showed great mercy to Zacharias and Elisbaeth. They rejoiced with her. Everybody suggested a name to be chosen for this baby, and they thought of his father's own name, to be handed down to his son. But there was a difference of opinion. The dumb Zacharias 'asked for a writing table,' *i.e.*, tablet, and in our picture we see him writing, 'His name is John' (verse 63).

This is what the angel had told him in the Temple. 'And they marvelled all. And his mouth opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, and praised God. And fear came on all that dwelt round about them: and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judæa. And all they that heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be! And the hand of the Lord was with him. And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; the oath which he swore to our father Abraham, That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life. And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; to give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace' (St. Luke i. 63-79).

St. Luke i. verse 80 says: 'And the child (John) grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel.' In absolute seclusion we see John the Baptist preparing himself for his mighty mission. Here the question presents itself—whence was the account of the Annunciation obtained? Evidently from the Blessed Virgin Mary, who alone could have given the details of what took place. She is probably the source not only of the account of the Annunciation, but of the account of the visit to Elizabeth, which is vividly described, and in which that great thanksgiving, the Magnificat, points to Mary's

direct authorship. Indeed, a larger passage of St. Luke may be ascribed to her authorship, beginning at the fifth verse of the first chapter, where the classical Greek of the first four verses suddenly changes to Hebraistic Greek, and the narrative continues to be distinguished by this characteristic up to the end of the second chapter, where the passage communicated by the Blessed Virgin comes to a close.

Thus far we have been occupying ourselves with John's life. Here we must pause and begin to think about a far more important event, the event of all events, the birth into this world of our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ. St. Matthew i. verses 18-25, tells us about this, and connects everything with the prophecies in the Old Testament. St. Matthew quotes Isaiah to this effect: 'Behold, a virgin . . . shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us (St. Matthew i. verse 23); 'and she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins' (St. Matthew i. verse 21).

The word Jesus is the Greek form of Joshua, which means, Jehovah is Salvation. Christ is the Greek form of the Hebrew Messiah. The Anointed One is the official name of the Saviour. An angel had appeared to Joseph in a dream, telling him all that was going to happen, and that he was to have no fear. This is obviously Joseph's own account. At this time, we read in Luke ii. verse 1, that a new decree was made. The words of St. Luke are: 'And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus (the Roman Emperor), that all the world should be taxed' (*i.e.*, enrolled). This means that a general registration of names of all the inhabitants was to be taken, what we may call a census—the census of Quirinius, not till later civil governor of Syria, but perhaps then military head. The Jews were all most particular as to their names being put down in their own native city. The families of Joseph and Mary belonged to Bethlehem as descendants of David. There they wished to be enrolled. It just occurs to me to mention the meaning of the word Bethlehem. It is rather a nice meaning. The word Bethlehem means: 'place of bread.' With love and reverence we read in the Bible that our Lord called Himself the 'Bread of Life.'

The journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem which Joseph and Mary took necessitated their turning in a southward direction. We can picture Mary riding on an ass, according to the custom of the country, comfortably seated on piled-up rugs; no doubt an earthen ware jug would be slung across the animal, also a leathern pouch or bag, with bread and dates and figs, provisions provided for the

journey. The two travellers would come to the rocky gorge of Esdraelon, they would reach the town of Engannim, all amongst fruitful orchards. They would in due course find themselves among the hills of Samaria, possibly a night's rest might be taken in the valley of Shechem, the modern Nablus, situated between the mounts Ebal and Gerizim, the mountain of cursing and the mountain of blessing as they are called in Scripture.

We recall to mind that in this particular part of Palestine, the ratification of the Old Covenant of God with the Hebrews took place. It was in this region that Samuel first prophesied. Here were some places of intensest interest in Bible history, for instance, Shiloh and Bethel, the place where Abraham had first pitched his tents, where Jacob lodged on his way to Mesopotamia, and where he had his ladder-dream. And thus the two would journey on, and reach, one after another, many celebrated places associated with stirring memories of the past and of Old Testament days. Mizpah would come in sight, the watchtower of the land, built on a lofty eminence. The grave of Rachel would be another landmark. Altogether the journey would be about ninety miles. At last, weary and travel-stained this humble pair would reach Bethlehem, glad to find rest no matter where, in that overcrowded and noisy inn, which gave them so scant a welcome. Oh! how I wish that my readers could see with their own eyes this wonderful city of Bethlehem, as I first set eyes upon it that never-to-be-forgotten day when I reached it.

Leaving Jerusalem, and passing along the high road, a very sinister spot is pointed out to you on your left. A solitary tree, which has ever since borne the name of a most miserable man, marks the spot. This is where Judas is said to have hanged himself, after he had betrayed our Lord. We pass, in Spring, along intensely green fields on either side, the very fields where Ruth had gleaned; the very pastures where King David, when still a shepherd-boy, had watched and tended his flocks. In front of us open out terraces built by means of stone walls, made out of chips and pieces of rock. Fig and olive trees abound. Here, as chief feature of the landscape, Bethlehem itself spreads out. Hardly does imagination carry us so far as to make it possible to believe that this is Bethlehem, and that such a privilege should be ours, that our very eyes can look upon the birthplace of our Blessed Lord. On the afternoon I am speaking about, a brilliant sun was shining brightly. Thick, white, fleecy, gold-lined clouds were overhead. The air was balmy. A wondrous feeling possessed the very soul. Never shall I forget entering Bethlehem. In the old wall, the well was pointed out to me which we remember in connection with King David. 'And David

longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Beth-lehem, that is at the gate!' (1 Chronicles xi. verse 17).

On the roadside coming along, I had also passed another well, the same one, we are told to-day, which the three Magi had halted by, to refresh themselves and their camels, when they were pilgrimaging to Bethlehem at the time of the birth of our Lord. Strange, as well as interesting, is the fact that after all these years, the customs of Palestine have remained unchanged. The day I was travelling in this country, strings of camels were sallying forth with dark-stained Arabs, clothed with a white shirt and an upper garment, and a handkerchief headgear secured by means of a black silken cord, men and boys sitting jauntily on the backs of the animals, the former swaying to and fro in perfect rhythm with the camel's gait. There were other boys and men filling skins of animals with water, just as we read of their doing in the Old Testament days, and slinging them when full across their backs, either carrying them away home, or by means of a little bell which they rang attracting the notice of passers-by, who are always glad of water in that thirsty land.

Here was Bethlehem with all its associations. Here it was that Mary gave birth to that Holy Child, her first-born Son, who was wrapped up in swaddling clothes, and was cradled in a manger. In olden days the Arabs often built houses near and into the rocks. We still come across this kind of house; they are called Khans, and we would call them inns. Thus we can picture the whole scene, just as it all took place, at the very time of the birth of our Saviour. You pass through an archway and enter a court-yard, a large open space, in the middle of which stands, as its chief feature, a huge basin built over the well. The mere sight of the water refreshes the weary traveller and his still more worn-out animal. 'Water, water,' is the cry of all in that hot and dusty country. Round this open space, against the walls, straw and food are littered about. Animals are tied up, and packages lie about promiscuously. On the first floor an overhanging gallery affords accommodation for the traveller himself. On that most memorable occasion, the khan, or inn, was full to overflowing. No guest-chamber was vacant for Mary and her unborn babe. These travellers, who bore with them God's gracious destiny for all mankind, had to take their chance among the humblest of the other wayfarers.

No consideration or attention appears to have been given to this chosen woman, the Mother of our Lord. Thus we see that this wonderful babe was born into our world under more trying condi-

tions than other children. Our Saviour's birth at Bethlehem recalls to us a Messianic prophecy (Micah v. verse 2): 'But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.' Jesus was the most wonderful child that has ever been born on earth, and yet he was born like any other child. The destinies of mankind, and the higher life of the human race, were bound up in this little helpless babe.

Outside of the khan in the fields, on this wonderful first Christmas night, awaiting dawn and sunrise, shepherds were taking their rest, each with his staff at his side, around a camp fire, lighted to scare away any prowling wild beast. From Jewish sources we gather that the sheep fed on the heights of Bethlehem were the Temple flocks which were kept there all the year round, and used for sacrifices. It is significant that He whose coming was to end all these sacrifices, by the sacrifice of Himself, should be born so near to the pasturage of the sacrificial Temple sheep.

No doubt, in the distance, the shepherds would see the lights of Bethlehem. Overhead the windows of heaven opened, so as to reveal the splendour of the starry skies, seen best in the clear atmosphere of that land of marvellous history. Such, if we may recall it, was probably the scene on this auspicious occasion.

Suddenly an angel of the Lord stood by them and announced: 'Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour which is Christ the Lord.' Then the heavenly host said 'Glory to God' under the starlight; strains of melody sounded from the skies, until all was trobbing with love and light and life. Full of curiosity as to what could be possibly happening, possessed with eagerness to see for themselves this wondrous child, guided by the Heavenly Vision, we see our shepherds coming to worship Jesus in His manger-cradle, which was really His manger-throne. Simple shepherds, we see, are thus the first to worship Him who called Himself the Good Shepherd, who said that one day there would be one flock, one Shepherd. Blessed shepherds to be thus privileged.

It may be not uninteresting to recall here, that sheep are the first domesticated animals we hear of in Bible history. We remember reading about them in connection with Abel; then with Abraham and Lot; with Jacob, Rebecca, and Rachel. In a pastoral community they were counted as the chief wealth of those who possessed them. Job had 7000 before his misfortunes and 14,000 after. Men and women tended them carefully. The office of looking after them

was one of great responsibility. A shepherd was an important person, as having such valuable property in his charge.

In Syria to-day we see flocks of sheep and goats, the shepherd walking at the head of them, and leading them—just as in our Lord's time, and as He describes it; each one of them he knows by name, so that he can call them separately. He always has a dog, but there is no need for the dog to be so active as is the case with us; there the dog is merely for extra protection. When in the Holy Land, I used to watch the Bedouin women, children of the desert, pouring the milk of their animals into a skin, then tying it up at either end to a pole fastened down to the ground, and then a woman pulling a rope attached to the skin, swinging the skin up and down, thus churning butter.

Because these animals which I have been speaking about were of such importance to the people of old, we see how natural it was for them to be spoken of so constantly in the Bible. Poor little helpless animals, especially the young, stray and get lost and come to grief, just as we, in our own spiritual lives, are only too apt to do. It is with gratitude that we look to Our Shepherd, who never fails to come to our rescue when He hears us calling to Him for succour and help. No animal in the Scriptures compares with the sheep as a religious symbol. The Lord's people are His sheep, and He is their Shepherd. Nay, the symbol of the sheep is taken to describe the relation of Christ to His people: He is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world by the sacrifice of Himself. Each time we come across a shepherd in the Holy Land, the thought comes to one's mind that it was to such as these God first sent his Best of Tidings. They look very picturesque in their loose draperies, called over there *caftan* and *abba*. The staff they carry has a thick heavy notch at the top, and has a quantity of nails driven into it, so that it makes a powerful weapon of offence or defence. Oftentimes I have heard them blowing a weird little melody, just on two or three plaintive notes, produced from a simple instrument made by them out of a cane.

It is quite easy to understand why the shepherds were sore afraid. We in England are breathless with excitement, even in these latter days, when we realise the scene of that night, as we stand with rapt gaze in contemplation of hallowed memories. The glory of the Lord shone about those shepherds. Bathed in the all-pervading sunshine and with the fairy-like colouring of that wondrous country, as I beheld it, all looks to-day indescribably beautiful. What must it have been on that supreme occasion in the glorious

Eastern moonlight, when Christ was born, and the glory of the Lord shone around? The shepherds were visited by angel-messengers, who said: 'Fear not.' God is always consoling us; He is constantly telling us not to be afraid. How good God is, and how thankful we ought ever to be.

St. Luke ii. verses 10, 11: 'Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.' They were told that they were to receive a proof. The angel's words to the shepherds are (verse 12): 'And this shall be a sign unto you (R.V. 'is the sign'); ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.' Our Evangelist goes on to say: 'And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.'

Glory to God! Good-will to men. Here we have the revelation of what is best to act on. To praise and to glorify God, and to have goodwill, which means to feel and to act kindly towards our fellow-creatures. This is the lesson which Christ came to teach us, and which He desires us to learn. The shepherds had said, ' . . . Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us' (verse 15). So they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger, and adored Him. Let our loving thoughts turn often to this incomparable scene. They might well marvel at everything, as even now we do as to how all came to pass. We have seen them kneeling before the Infant King. We also are bidden to do likewise. 'They made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child' (verse 17). We are again told to do the same, and to make the Good News known to all people. We read that Mary 'kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart' (St. Luke ii. verse 19). Let us too ponder. But let us never be tempted to doubt. Just here it is appropriate for us to turn to the Old Testament prophet Isaiah (chapter ix. verse 6) and read: 'For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.'

Truly these are wonderful words, fraught with deepest meaning. How can chance or doubt hold a place in the Bible? Surely not, in face of such prophecies and of such fulfilments on God's part. Such forethought, such wisdom, such continuity of purpose. Indeed, we cannot help seeing His guiding hand through all the ages.

We have here a lovely picture to look at. We see the two holy children, Our Lord Jesus and John the Baptist. They are embracing and kissing one another—a beautiful foreshadowing of their after-life.

CHAPTER XX.

THE GOSPELS (JESUS AT BETHLEHEM—AT JERUSALEM—AT NAZARETH).

WHEN Jesus was eight days old, Mary and Joseph took Him to the Temple. The Blessed Virgin felt gratitude welling up in her heart. She wished to give expression to this by a thanksgiving offering. According to Eastern custom those who were rich gave a lamb for a burnt offering; those that were poor brought two pigeons. Mary was, we see, among the poor folk. The sin offering was made for the purification of the mother.

Jesus underwent the Jewish rite of circumcision. We remember that this custom dated back to the days of Abraham. We remember reading about the patriarch circumcising his son Isaac by the rite which taught the duty of having the body as well as the mind consecrated unto the Lord.

St. Luke ii. verse 25: 'And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel (*i.e.*, the Messianic age) and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ' (*i.e.*, the Messiah of God).

How beautiful was this promise of the realisation of the Messianic hope. What a favoured man he was to be allowed to hold the precious Babe in his arms. Moved by the Holy Spirit he came into the Temple when the Blessed Virgin entered, 'then took he him in his arms.' Deeply moved was the old man. He blessed God for this great privilege. Looking first in tenderest love at this marvellous Child, then raising up his eyes in gratitude to God in Heaven, this venerable old man spoke those inspired words: 'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation (*i.e.*, the Messiah), which thou hast prepared before the face of all people: a light to lighten the Gentiles (R.V., 'a light for revelation to the Gentiles') and the glory of thy people Israel' (verses 29-32). The happy mother afterwards heard from Simeon those prophetic words how her own heart would be pierced by the sword of sorrow, on account of the sufferings of her Divine Child, a prophecy fulfilled at the Crucifixion.

Before proceeding let us dwell one moment on a meaning of the word Gentiles. The beautiful passage we have just quoted speaks of 'a light to lighten the Gentiles.' Who are these people that are justified in rejoicing in the promise of such a valuable gift at God's hands as light to lighten them? The word 'Gentiles' represents *Góim* (Heb., nations), common in the O.T. to designate non-Jewish people; that is to say, those who were not circumcised, nor privileged to participate in the much-prized Temple worship. A Gentile meant, in the mouth of a Jew, a heathen or pagan. At the time that the Gospels were written the Jew was still highly considered, but the Gentile also was received into the Christian Church. Through God's wonderful ordering, the Gentiles at this present time compose the great bulk of God's own people, namely, those who are members of the universal Church of Christ. It is the nation of the Jews that has brought down upon itself the reproach of the whole world by rejecting its own Messiah, our Christ, and in so doing has failed to fulfil God's purpose, by which through it all the nations of the world were to be blessed. In the days of Simeon it was the Gentile who was the alien, and yet Gentiles were the very ones specially chosen to have this Divine light of Christ shed on their path. Salvation was promised to them. We see for ourselves how true this promise was, and how all has come about just in this very way.

The Holy Virgin and Joseph marvelled at Simeon's words. And there was in the Temple along with the others a very old woman, who had lived seven years with her husband till his death, and eighty-four years as his widow, and would, therefore, if she was not more than twelve years when married, be of the great age of a hundred and three. This was 'one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser' (St. Luke ii. verse 36). She corroborated the testimony of Simeon, and showed that she also knew that this Holy Child was the Messiah of Israel. She 'departed not from the Temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day' (verse 37). She came into the Temple that very instant when the infant Jesus was in Simeon's arms, and also gave thanks to the Lord, and spake of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

We have seen how shepherds sought the Christ-child in order to adore Him. In our next two pictures, which are respectively by Ghirlandaio and Fabriano, dealing with the adoration of the Magi, we notice in the background a procession wending its way along, all the people bent on finding the marvellous Babe. We come now to the visit of the Magi, which the A.V. translates 'wise men' in

St. Matthew's account. They came from the East—from Media, Persia, or Babylonia, a priestly caste of magical tendencies, much engaged in study of the stars and divination. Daniel in his lifetime was chief of the Magi of Babylon, a renowned interpreter of dreams, and since the study of the stars was specially carried on in Babylon these Magi were probably Babylonians. The Jewish connection was strong in Babylonia, and therefore the widespread Jewish excitement at this time about the near coming of the Messiah would be well known. On this particular occasion some new star appears to have swum into their field of vision, and to have become connected in their minds with the expectation of the Messiah, to worship whom they had set forth. The Magi were bent on finding the wonderful Child. They came from very far—whether from Persia, Babylonia, or Media is not certain. They at first came to the conclusion that this Holy Child could only have been born at the capital itself, namely, Jerusalem. Thither they went—no doubt on camels, the ships of the desert, richly caparisoned, with gay and bright saddles and harness—accompanied by a retinue of servants laden with precious gifts, as the Queen of Sheba was when she visited King Solomon, wherewith to do homage to this new-born King.

Having arrived at Jerusalem, they heard the old prophecies of Bethlehem as the place of the wonderful birth. The object of their coming aroused the bitter jealousy of the evil-minded Herod, known as Herod the Great, who reigned from 37 B.C. to 4 B.C. As Jesus was born two years before Herod's death, the date of His birth could not be later than 6 B.C., and this date is generally accepted. Herod was by birth an Idumæan, by religious profession a Jew. A tributary king under the Roman Empire, in touch with Greek as well as Roman civilisation, he was practically cosmopolitan. His one aim and object was to secure his very unstable position. National feeling was strongly against him. Carried away by the fashion then prevalent amongst the Romans for restoring old cities and old temples, Herod commenced rebuilding the Temple at Jerusalem B.C. 20-19. A desire to promote the religious welfare of the people, says Josephus, was the reason alleged by Herod. The real reason was pride—the desire to raise a magnificent memorial of himself.

At the time of which we are speaking Herod was king of Judæa, but he was a tributary under the Roman Emperor. Herod was a most cruel tyrant: he killed his wife and his two sons, and he was extremely suspicious of plots against himself; so he sat lonely on his throne and died a dreadful death. His memory accordingly has been handed down to posterity as infamous. In his perplexity as

to the inquiries of the Magi about the Infant-King, he began asking the chief priests and the scribes where Christ should be born. Herod was told by the chief priests and scribes, 'In Bethlehem of Judæa,' for everything had come about as had been foretold by the prophets. Have we not just read for ourselves in the prophets Micah and Isaiah that this was so indeed? Herod was told: 'And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda' (St. Matthew ii. verse 6). Well, we understand what this means. Bethlehem was truly a privileged place to be selected as the birthplace of our Lord. Where is the city, indeed, which would not willingly have changed places with Bethlehem, to be remembered for all ages to come as the home of the lowly but all-holy Jesus? Herod was told: 'Out of thee (Bethlehem) shall come a governor, that shall rule my people Israel' (verse 6). (R.V. 'shall be shepherd of.')

The Magi were instructed to search diligently for the young Child until they found Him, and then to return to Herod, in order that he, too, might worship Him. The Magi arrived at Bethlehem, and there they saw the star standing, or seeming to stand, over the place where the Babe was lying. When they saw the star they rejoiced with exceeding great joy, and when they were come unto the house they fell down on their knees and worshipped the Child. This was the first Epiphany: the first manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles. Better instructed than the Magi, we shall try to realise the mystery of Christ's twofold personality, and we shall believe in the reality of this fact, that He was at once Perfect Man and Perfect God.

To the Holy Child the Wise Men presented their gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh. All these were, it is said, symbolical: gold was the proper offering to a King, symbolising Christ's royalty; frankincense, or incense, which is a dry, resinous, sweet-smelling gum, symbolised Christ's divinity; myrrh is the gum of a tree which grows in Palestine on the slopes and hillsides. This gum has a bitter taste: on this account we take it that this offering of myrrh was symbolical of the bitterness and suffering, and especially of the Passion, which Christ had to endure while on earth.

That the Magi should not have been staggered when they found the Infant-King in such humble surroundings is much to their credit, and shows the strength of their faith, and the power of their insight which penetrated beneath externals, and found in Jesus, the King, to do homage to whom they had travelled so far by the guiding of a star. If they came from the Euphrates, as seems probable, this was the land from which Balaam had come to prophesy, when contrary to his own will he had predicted the blessings **that were to**

come through Israel; and this was the land in which, at a much later date, Daniel was made the chief of the Magi or Wise Men, owing to his skill in interpreting dreams, and where he had seen the vision of the Son of Man, and recorded his great Messianic prophecy.

To the Magi, who were interpreters of dreams, was given the warning, very appropriately in a dream, not to return to Jerusalem. As by a flash of lightning on a dark night, we see these real but mysterious personages for a moment, and then they disappear for ever. For a moment let us pause in our reading. Let us devote ourselves now to the study of the meaning of one of our pictures on the subject before us. Is not the amiable old man with his white hair, who is kissing the little foot of our Infant Saviour, an attractive figure? This very foot it was which, after the Child had grown into Man, was kissed by a sinful woman and wetted with loving tears, for sin forgiven and repentant love accepted; and this very foot was afterwards nailed to the Cross. Then we see the other two Magi, reverently and with much dignity, advancing; one of them is a dusky-skinned sage, young in years, and this reminds us that the black races are destined to accept one day the Saviour of the world. In the foreground of the picture we see two darling innocent children, clad in purest white robes, these latter stained with drops of blood, a symbol of violent death inflicted by the swords of Herod's cruel soldiers. Of such innocent-hearted, innocent-lived little children is the Kingdom of Heaven: as the Child of Bethlehem afterwards taught in His manhood when He said, 'Suffer the little children to come unto me' (St. Mark x. verse 14).

Again, we see John the Baptist painted on this picture as a grown-up man. The Italian artist got somewhat mixed in this way: he forgot while painting that Christ and John were almost the same age. Ghirlandaio thought of John as the grown-up man in all his strength and vigour. No doubt the Scripture words were uppermost in his mind: 'Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist' (St. Luke vii. verse 28). We must all admire this gloriously painted picture, and those who have seen it are never likely to forget it. The seascape in the background lights up the whole canvas. The ships we see sailing on the blue waters we imagine to be those in which apostles like St. Paul went to foreign lands all over the Mediterranean, anxious and fervent in heart to do their Master's behest, namely, to spread His good news among all people. This picture was painted by order for the chapel of an institution established for dear little innocent children to live in, and to be brought to Christ; such children as are called 'foundlings,' and are taken care of by kind people. We ever

pray that all dwellers in the Innocenti Hospital in Florence may be specially blessed, that a rich harvest for good may be gathered in, and souls won for Christ and the Heavenly Home above.

Herod soon realised that he had been mocked and that his orders had been disregarded. He was furious, and he resolved that, although not able to find this Royal Child, he would make sure of preventing such a rival from sitting on his throne. He ordered all male children of two years old and under to be slain. The mothers of Bethlehem were made to moan and to grieve over the loss of their beloved little ones. Jeremiah (xxx. 15) has words applied by St. Matthew to the slaughter of the Innocents: 'In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation and weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and would not be comforted because they are not.' And, indeed, how was it possible for these poor mothers ever to be comforted or consoled for the loss of their slaughtered children? Our Heavenly Father was all the while watching over the safety of His Divine Son. Jesus was far away from envy, hatred, and malice. Joseph had another dream, and once more was directed by God what to do. St. Matthew ii. 13: ' . . . Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt.' Joseph arose, and started by night, and we read of his taking the young Child and his mother to their destination. Here they remained until Herod had died. On the flight into Egypt St. Matthew quotes Hosea xi. 1: 'Out of Egypt have I called my Son,' though these words referred to the calling of the Israelites out of Egypt. This is taken from the Hebrew directly.

Guided in a dream by God's angel, Joseph returned to the land of Israel with the young Child and the Blessed Virgin. Herod was dead, but Archelaus reigned in his father's stead, and Joseph was still fearful of returning to Judæa, and decided to go into Galilee, to a city called Nazareth. Once more let us recall St. Matthew's characteristic Jewish view: 'He shall be called a Nazarene' (St. Matthew ii. 23).

The Flight into Egypt has been treated by many of the Italian artists. Before us we have a very interesting picture by Benozzo Gozzoli: we see Mary seated on her ass, with her precious Babe clasped closely in her arms, and Joseph leading them along on their journey, passing the mountain of Olivet on their right, and leaving Jerusalem behind with all its walls and towers, as they were making their way towards Egypt.

In Nazareth, where our Holy Family now took up their abode, we have another famous town of Palestine, ever to be remembered in connection with our Saviour's life. The situation of Nazareth

is beautiful in the extreme. Situated on the gentle slopes of the lower hills of Galilee, its houses are of white limestone, and stand in the midst of profuse greenery, fruit trees, olive groves, and vineyards. Everything looks exquisitely clean, and all is kept in good order by the inhabitants of to-day, who are mostly Christians. At Nazareth there is a well. From time immemorial this has been the one and only water supply of Nazareth. Therefore we are justified in believing that to this well came the Virgin Mary, accompanied by her Son. At the present day customs and dress prevail in Nazareth much as in the days of old, for the unchanging East is all around us. At sunset in the evening women and girls and boys sally forth, every one attired in the quaint, gracefully flowing national costume, which is of varied and bright hues, intense and yet harmonious, thanks to the keen light and the power of the sun, before whose rays all is brought into harmony. The water for their home needs, which the villagers come in quest of, they carry away in odd-looking square tin waterpots, or in beautifully moulded earthenware vases, each one of which is poised with strictest security and perfect balance on shoulder or on head. In consequence of this the carriage of the inhabitants is erect and stately.

Seen from my tent, pitched on the opposite low range of hills, Nazareth rising right in front afforded me every opportunity of feasting my eyes on infinite beauty of scenery, and on flowering gardens which shed forth most delightful perfumes. A fine building which stands out boldly on an eminence commands attention. This is the Girls' College, where little Arab children are brought up, and are taught Christ's loving words of command: 'Suffer the little children to come unto me.'

Never shall I forget the ride I took after visiting this Girls' Home, and having been shown round by a little girl, called Nassra. Translated into English, this name is Victoria. All the little children are happy, and the Englishwomen who keep the school provided a great pleasure for me. All these Arab girls united and sang songs and hymns in English, which the children pronounced very well indeed, and also in Arabic, which sounded melodious and soft. Riding away from here, up towards the hill beyond and above this building, I arrived at the summit of the range of hills. One thought was ever uppermost—the thought that our Blessed Saviour must often have visited this same place. I felt this indeed to be for myself, as for ever Christian, holy ground.

Hither He must have walked to be alone, and to approach and commune with His Father in Heaven. His eyes must have beheld all the beauty of the scene spread before Him. On that memorable

evening on which I was first privileged to feel the associations of those sublime surroundings, I looked out into the country on all sides: there was not a single view which was not wonderfully inspiring. There, at one's feet, the plain of Esdraelon lay spread out, like a thick-piled Eastern carpet. On one side was Mount Carmel, on the other Mount Tabor. Then Megiddo, Samaria, Gilboa; the village of Endor, notorious for the witch who was consulted by Saul; Jezreel in the middle of cornfields; with Mount Hermon, snow-crested, towering over all. Quite close by is the site of the tiny village of Sesostris, considered to be the spot where stood the native village of the Virgin Mary, where she dwelt as a child, according to a tradition, with her parents. As an illustration of the saintliness possible in childhood we give a picture of St. Ursula.

Away in another direction, is the Haifa Harbour, with the town of Acre, and the blue and calm Mediterranean beyond. Then again, are to be seen the breezy uplands of Naphtali and Zebulun. The bluest of blue skies is above, the dearest of flowers under one's feet. Never shall I forget it all. Oh! to be there once more, and for numberless people to have an opportunity to be there, in order that each might drink in and make his own the atmosphere and associations of one of the holiest places on earth. Simply to realise this, that our Lord had once rested here, that His gaze had dwelt upon every detail of this country, that here was where He had often knelt in prayer, is an inspiring and elevating experience.

The sun went down, a huge golden-red ball, and dipped into the sea. Its dying glory suffused the heavens for a while, and the sky took tints and hues which baffle description. Quietly nature gave itself up to repose, and the flowers closed their tired eyelids. One silvery star appeared and looked around as if to ascertain that it had made no mistake as to its appointment. It seemed to express surprise, but not for long was it left alone or in doubt. Soon, one by one, peeped out its companions, and they all gave a smile of welcome to one another. Through the clear dry Eastern atmosphere the stars seemed double the size they seem at home, as their silvery fires flashed and flared through the darkening vault of heaven. Thus ever changing, but ever abiding in beauty, God's great infinity of the Universe opened vista after vista of exquisite and varied loveliness. It required a wrench on my part to tear myself away from this enthralling scene; but my pony had carried me up well, and he knew evening had come on apace, and that well-earned rest was now his due. He was now pawing the ground, and I took it to mean that he was asking me for his much-needed

supper. So we left the place of hallowed memories, of grandeur and greatness, resting in God's hands. We took away a priceless possession, a memory which we shall ever keep. It is from such vivid experiences on the spot that we gain a sense of the reality of what we read in the Bible.

St. Luke, who passes over the Visit of the Magi and the Flight into Egypt, which bulks so large in St. Matthew's mind, proceeds at once from what we have read about Anna the prophetess to the return to Nazareth (ii. 39-40): 'And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord they returned into Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth. And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.'

Nazareth was particularly well suited for the bringing up of a child, and we can see how much our Lord valued in later years His early training here. A minute or two ago we alluded to its being a hill-town. In such it is commonly the case that the race is strong and hardy, as well as hard-working. Farmers and village workmen live strenuous lives. The youthful Jesus would draw in the sound principle of the sanctity and nobleness or labour from the everyday life he saw around Him, and lived Himself in Joseph the carpenter's shop. His sympathies would go out towards the masses whose destiny is to earn their daily bread. The spirit of self-reliance, of duty, of unselfishness, would impress His fresh and developing mind. Among frank, open, true and generously-minded people, Jesus would thus grow up and be able to enter into sympathy with them, sympathy afterwards to expand into His matchless sympathy with all sorts and conditions of men.

The people of Galilee in our Saviour's time spoke two languages: Aramaic, or Syrian, which had taken the place of Hebrew, and Greek, which had come to be the language of the Eastern Empire since the days of Alexander the Great. Our Saviour evidently spoke and read Greek with facility, and the Greek Bible was the one with which He was most familiar, and which He habitually quoted for most parts of the Old Testament. To-day, French and Turkish or Arabic are freely used in the Holy Land. Jesus would be taught the Jewish faith and the Jewish Scriptures, and would be versed in all customs and laws of the synagogue at Nazareth. We know that every year there was held in Jerusalem the great feast of the Passover. His parents regularly attended this festival, one which the Jews had never, since the earliest days, allowed to fall into permanent disuse.

When Jesus was twelve years old, He was taken by His parents to join in this great religious duty. It is not difficult to picture

to ourselves all the experiences that would crowd in upon the fresh and undefiled mind of this carefully nurtured and holy boy. The same caravan road still exists between Nazareth and Jerusalem. When visiting that part of the world, one's thoughts keep reverting to Bible days. How Christ must have enjoyed the same life-giving sunshine. How the bright-eyed flowers of the landscape in all their vari-coloured magnificence must have seemed to welcome Him as He went past.

This feast of the Passover always took place in the Spring. Surely this is the most glad and glorious time in any land, but without doubt pre-eminently so in the Holy Land. Winter rains and storms are all over, as if they had never been. Roads have been repaired; all nature has awakened, and is in a mood of intensest joy. Spring, glorious Spring, with fairy wand bids nature put on her crown and festal robe. Caravans of animals and people sally forth and swell the living stream of thousands making for the Holy City. Mules and camels are laden. All Palestine is on the move. No danger of prowling beast, no fear of attack from hostile tribe, daunts them. Roads and hills and valleys resound with songs and animation. All is life, activity, expectation. The path down from Nazareth is rocky and rough. Presently it leads to the very plain of Esdraelon which we have been speaking about, where Barak and Sisera fought, and on to the valley of Shechem, which is beautiful beyond words, wild and romantic. Whispering streams and melodious song of happy birds cheer the wanderer on his way. The Holy Family would pass on in turn to Shiloh, which at the present day is marked by a tottering ruin and a solitary tree, and then on to Bethel and the many places we have already spoken about. Each incident of the journey from Nazareth to Jerusalem would be of intense interest to a boy: the lighting of the fire at night to cook an evening meal; the fetching of the water from well or stream; the men ungirthing and unloading the animals and attending to their wants. Above all, the magic charm of the open country itself. All is so marvellously attractive. Perhaps five or six days would be spent on this journey. We see what trouble all these pilgrims took, and what hardships the people of those days were willing to endure, in order to gratify their intense pious longing, and fulfil their obligations by worshipping in the Holy Temple. Jerusalem, the rock-enthroned city, would at last be reached.

The central interest there is focussed on this very rock, of which we have already spoken in our Old Testament readings. It is the same which Araunah, the Jebusite, sold to King David, and the same on which Abraham had been willing to sacrifice his son Isaac.

Jerusalem (written Uhusalim) appears on the tablet letters, discovered at Tel-el-Amarna, between two kings, one of whom was an early ruler of Jerusalem, and the other was Amenephis the Fourth, one of the Pharaohs of Egypt as early as 1450 B.C., before the Hebrew conquest of Canaan. Earlier still were Abraham's relations with Melchisedec, king of Salem. The first half of the word, namely, Uru, means a city: Salim or Salem means peace, that is the city of peace. By the irony of fate it proved the exact opopsite, because perhaps in no other city of the world has there been so much bloodshed and so much destruction of the buildings of a place, as in this very city called Jerusalem—the 'city of peace.'

As regards Bible days, as we have seen, the city of Jerusalem was first mentioned in connection with that mysterious Priest-King Melchisedec, king of Salem, as it was then called. It may have been called Jebus at a later date, when the Jebusites were its inhabitants. To this day we have traces of their handwriting as to the foundations of the city. The holy rock is now enclosed and protected by the Mosque of Omar, which was built by a Mohammedan potentate. When the tribes entered Canaan, Jerusalem is first mentioned by that name as the city of King Adoni-zedec in the book of Joshua x. verse 1. King David removed his court from Hebron to Jerusalem. Here too was placed the Holy Ark, and afterwards was built the Holy Temple, from which Jerusalem obtained its name of the Holy City. We have read about the many wars which laid it low, and also how idolatrous Jews worshipped the host of heaven and groves and other idols in the Temple, even in the days of King Manasseh. Then how Jerusalem was restored and the true worship re-established in solitary majesty in the Temple by different good kings and prophets. We read then of internal conflicts, and of the falling out of the Tribes amongst themselves; we read of the Assyrians attacking and of the Chaldeans besieging and taking the Holy City, and leading its inhabitants into captivity. Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age' (2 Chronicles xxxvi. verse 17). The Jews have never left off lamenting the lost independence of their beloved city. After a glorious struggle against the Syrian rule, Palestine passed into the possession of the world-empire of Rome, and the Jews were subject to Rome at the time of our Lord's ministry on earth. Jerusalem, from its close connection with our Lord, holds a place of its own as the most sacred city of the world.

And now, after this short digression and attempted description

of Jerusalem, let us get back to the Bible, and read of Our Blessed Lord when he was a boy of twelve, and think of the city and the festal garb it wore on the occasion of that memorable feast of the Passover. People would come, as we said awhile ago, from far and near, and Jerusalem would be full to overflowing. Outside the city walls tents would be put up for the accommodation of friends and travellers. Green boughs would be cut off and laid across the canvas to protect the inmates against the heat. People would festively adorn all available open spaces with palms and green branches, until the whole place would be decked out. Eastern street life is at best noisy, so would it be more than ever on this special occasion. At such a time even to-day vendors shout their wares; drivers urge on fatigued animals: in the narrow streets people jostle one another, and it is impossible to describe all the stirring scenes that meet the eye on the arrival, on such a day, in an Eastern town, of vast multitudes of people. Into such surroundings would the Boy Jesus be launched on this His first journey from home. What a multitude of impressions would crowd in on his receptive mind. The approach to the Temple would be full of interest on account of the worship He would there see conducted for the first time. The young worshipper would be eager and alert not to miss anything of what might be heard and seen.

After worship in the Temple we know that Jesus took the first important step in his life as it is recorded in the Bible. The most learned of the Jews at that time were called Rabbis, and used to teach their pupils in the Temple courts and porticos. The Rabbis sat on carpets spread on the pavement, and their pupils sat around them. They taught by putting questions to their pupils, and they encouraged their pupils to put questions to them. Jesus during this visit to Jerusalem joined of his own choice one of these Rabbi's classes, and such was the result of the questions which He asked, and the depth of the answers which He gave, that a number of Rabbis seem to have collected to hear this marvellous boy.

Our Italian picture represents Him as occupying a central position, or walking about among the Rabbis, grown old in years as well as in experience, but St. Luke tells us that Jesus was found in the Temple 'sitting' in the midst of the doctors (that is, the rabbis), hearing them and asking them questions.

At the close of the feast there would be a great exodus. All once more would be turmoil and uproar and preparation for the departure.

St. Luke ii. verses 43-49: 'And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and

Joseph and his mother knew not of it. But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him. And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (better R.V.: 'in my Father's house?').

St. Luke goes on to say (verses 50-52): 'And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them. And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.' This brief episode, and the comments on it in the second chapter of St. Luke, open to the sympathetic eye an illuminating vision of that perfect boyhood. All the information was evidently from our Lord's mother, for who but she could record such facts as this, known to herself alone? 'But his mother kept all these sayings in her heart' (Luke ii. verse 51). The beginning of the same verse contains information from the same source, and shows us that our Lord's astonishing revelation of His mental powers before the admiring Rabbis in the Temple had not been allowed by Him to lessen in any degree the paramount claims of parental authority. This boy from an obscure Galilean village was evidently not in the least carried away by the gratifying acknowledgment of the brilliancy of His genius by the chief men of His nation at the sacred centre of the national and religious life. From this episode we learn the practical lesson that obedience to parents and those in authority is a part of the attainments of the perfect boyhood, and that Christ feels for and understands the needs of a boy.

From our Lord's twelfth year up to His thirtieth there is almost a blank in the records of His life. There are a few valuable allusions, which enable us to form an idea of how those years were passed, which we will consider later on. The birth of Jesus was, as we have seen, closely associated with John the Baptist's birth, and we now come to a still closer association in afterlife. The event which brought them so closely together was the baptism of Jesus, a rite which was administered by John the Baptist. Baptism was

not a new thing when first John preached. The teaching of the Law was that those who had incurred a Levitical defilement were to baptize or plunge themselves in water before they offered sacrifices. Moreover, when Gentiles become proselytes, they were admitted to Israel's privileges by the rites of circumcision, baptism, and sacrifice, the baptism being the acknowledgment and symbolical removal of defilement. In other words, the admission into the privileges of the Old Covenant was prepared for by bodily washing or baptism; and just in the same way the admission into the Kingdom of God, the New Covenant, was to be introduced by a general baptism of those who were to be the true Israel. John's message was simply this: the Kingdom of God is at hand. John's baptism was the preparation for entrance into it. Israel, waiting for the Messiah and the kingdom of God, prepared themselves as their fathers had done at Mount Sinai. Everybody knew what the Kingdom of God meant, or at least attached a definite meaning to it; for this was, of course, the kingdom which the Messiah was, according to popular expectation, to establish on earth, of which the expectation was intense and widespread at that time. The approach of the Kingdom had been the message of the Old Testament; the coming of the Kingdom was to be the revelation of the New, for which coming this rite of Baptism was the preparation.

It was by the symbolical use of the old Jewish rite of Baptism that John the Baptist emphasised his teaching. He appeared upon the scene as the successor, after a long interval, of the prophets of old. From the very beginning of his preaching he commanded the attention of those to whom he addressed the announcement of the Kingdom, which they all looked for as near at hand. He called the people to repentance, for no gift could be granted from above so long as people were not sorry for their sins. John had an immense attraction for people of all classes. He was, in a remarkable way, a close copy of Elijah. He was a Nazarite from his mother's womb; one who had never tasted wine, a total abstainer from his birth: an ascetic of the severest kind, wearing the rough camel's hair of which the Arabs weave their tents, a fabric far more trying to the skin than sackcloth. This rough mantle, just like Elijah's mantle, was girt round by a leathern girdle, and for food he had nothing but what he could pick up in the desert: locusts, of which the untilled land in the East is full, and wild honey from the nests which the bees make in the hollows of the trees and rocks. After a long preparation in the desert, whither he had retired to be alone with God, he had come down to Jordan, as Elijah came out of the wilds of Gilead, and his vigorous denunciations of prevalent sins

as well as his ascetic habits and appearance, won him a wide hearing.

When interest in this strong personality increased, the multitude began questioning John as to who he was and on whose authority he was teaching. John confessed, and denied not, that he was not the Messiah, a supposition which his powerful personality had awakened in the minds of men. His fame spread through the country, and at Jerusalem, the centre of religious and national life, people became curious to find out all about this new prophet and what was his message to his generation. Many Pharisees and Sadducees came, with other people, to the Jordan, where John was baptizing, and were unsparingly condemned by the Baptist. The common people were baptized by him; the Pharisees and Sadducees were not, probably being repelled by his fierce denunciations. John said of himself: 'I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias' (St. John i. verse 23). John's duty was clearly shown to him by God. He was called upon to prepare the way for the Messiah. John was only the forerunner and servant, and he said of the Messiah: 'He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose' (St. John i. verse 27).

This striking and original preacher from the wilderness said of himself (St. Matthew iii. verse 11): 'I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.'

To see this Jordan where John was baptizing is to see a thing of beauty. The place where nowadays all pilgrims from distant lands all over the earth assemble to be baptized is said to be the very spot where John the Baptist carried on his ministry. The water is blue and the banks are green with graceful and bright green foliage. In the desert country near the Dead Sea, which is not far off, nature appears to be a lifeless thing, arid and bare and sandy. All the sweeter is the surprise when the Jordan breaks upon our view, winding along like a green ribbon through the sun-parched landscape. John was baptizing at Bethabara, literally meaning house of passing over (for which the R.V. reads Bethany). This is probably the same as Bethbarah mentioned in Gideon's message in Judges vii. verse 24. This spot about which we are speaking, if we may be allowed to assume a difficult identification, is surely most beautiful. Green banks lie almost level with the waters of the Jordan, that unique river, different from any other the wide world over, which is dreamy and dignified, graceful and grand, teeming with tenderest memories.

And just here let me mention something about this Jordan in connection with the pilgrims of to-day. Thousands of these yearly tread the pass between Jerusalem and Jericho, which bears the name of Wady Kelt. Russians, members of the ancient Eastern Church, are perhaps in greatest number. In their picturesque Russian national costume, much the worse for wear, they wend their way along on foot under the broiling sun, some of them barefoot, others still in snow-shoes. In order to arrive at the Jordan at Easter time, they are obliged to leave their native villages weeks beforehand, often in mid-winter, and this makes it necessary to pile on all their warm garments, which naturally they find, on arrival in that land of sun, uncomfortably burdensome. Most of them in one hand carry a kettle to make tea, without which no Russian can live, while in the other they carry a bottle in readiness to fill with water from the river Jordan, which is considered sacred. This they take back to Russia as the greatest of treasures to those who are waiting for their return in the home country. Most of them, too, are provided with a pilgrim's staff, attached to which they carry a palm or green bough, in remembrance of the banks of the Jordan. It is a most impressive sight to see these thousands of men and women, filled with reverence and regardless of hardships, bent on their pilgrimage, cheerfully undergoing many privations and untold fatigue during their long and tedious journey. It is uplifting to realise the spirit of simple faith that sends them forth to the Holy Land, the spirit to satisfy which they are willing to risk their lives. One is filled with admiration, admitting that to them their religion, with its intense reality, is everything. Many of these people literally die by the roadside every year.

These pilgrims, moved by faith, yield to the over-mastering desire to see with their own eyes the places hallowed by the actual presence of Our Lord when on earth. These humble folk cause one to think a great deal. The question arises in one's own mind, What are we willing to suffer for Christ? How much do we put ourselves out for Christ? How much (or how little, we had better say) do we accomplish in our lukewarm attendance at church, all arranged and made easy for us? This, however, is a digression. Let us hurry back to the place where we see not only the Russians, but thousands of other pilgrims from distant climes and countries. I feel tempted to describe to my readers the dark-skinned and picturesque Bedouins, whom one also finds trudging along this same main route. The Bedouins, however, are not moved by the same purpose and the same faith. Here one may see gangs of camels laden with coal and coke, which they fetch from the mountains of

Gilead beyond the Jordan, reaching almost to the Dead Sea. On the fields on either side mother-camels are grazing, accompanied by their baby-camels, such darlings, with large intelligent and understanding eyes.

On the other side of the Jordan is the very same country where Elijah was wont to wander, and where he was fed by the ravens; and not far off the old paved Roman road is still in existence. It was also in those neighbouring mountain ranges that King David hid from his pursuers. We are in no danger of losing, nor would we wish to lose, any of the links of the chain which binds us to the days of old. The religious experience of to-day is vitally united to the religious experience of the past. One corroborates the other; and this same road we remember is made sacred by the footsteps of our Blessed Saviour, for on more than one occasion He must have come this way.

The people who came to John's baptism asked the Baptist what they ought to do, and he answered them thus: 'He that hath two coats let him impart to him that hath none: and he that hath meat, let him do likewise' (St. Luke iii. verse 11), which, in other words, is wise advice on the importance of leading unselfish lives, of living for the common good.

Then we see the publicans who came to be baptized inquiring in their turn. These latter were people who collected customs and duties for the Romans, and were prone to extortion. They asked John: 'Master, what shall we do?' The answer they got was: 'Exact no more than that which is appointed you' (St. Luke iii. verses 12, 13).

The soldiers then demanded of him what they were to do, and the answer came 'Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely, and be content with your wages' (St. Luke iii. verse 14). So to each class, John pointed out its special temptations, and its duty of overcoming them.

We now come to the supreme moment when Jesus came from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized by him: the sinless Jesus came, identifying himself with sinners that He might become their Saviour—in other words, the purpose of this baptism, was that baptism should be the preparation for entrance into the Kingdom of God, for the sinless King, as well as for His faulty subjects. Till Jesus came to be baptized by John, John had not recognised that Jesus was the Messiah, but he did recognise that his Cousin was a higher and holier man than himself, and he felt himself altogether unworthy to baptize Him. John forbade Christ saying: 'I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?' (St.

Matthew iii. verse 14). And Jesus answered and said unto him: 'Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness' (*i.e.*, John's baptism regarded as part of the Old Covenant).

And here we look at our beautiful pictures. St. Mark i. verses 10 and 11 says: 'And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him: and there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' Till the descent of the Holy Spirit, John did not realise that Jesus was the Messiah; the descent of the Spirit made him certain. 'I saw,' says John (which means that he gives his evidence as an eye-witness of what actually occurred). St. John i. verse 32: 'I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.' Jesus and John being already near relations, and their mothers close friends, were known to each other, and what John means when he says he 'knew him not,' is this, 'I knew him not to be the Messiah.'

In St. Luke's Gospel (iii. verse 22) we read: 'And a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased.' From the time of His baptism certainly, Jesus had the full consciousness that He was the Messiah, and the full resolve to establish the Kingdom of Heaven proclaimed by John the Baptist, purified and freed from popular misconceptions.

John the Baptist was not allowed to end his life peacefully. His mission was fulfilled when he had prepared his countrymen for the coming of the Messiah. Herod the Tetrarch had listened often to John the Baptist. The Baptist had openly shown his disapproval of Herod's marriage with Herodias, his own brother's wife. The Gospel of St. Mark (vi. verse 17), says that 'Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison, for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife.' John the Baptist had told Herod that he was offending against God's law. Therefore, Herodias, resenting this, had a bitter grudge against the prophet. Had she been able she would have killed him (St. Mark vi. verse 20): 'For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him' (R.V., kept him safe); 'and when he heard him, he did many things' (he was much perplexed, R.V.), 'and heard him gladly,' *i.e.*, he felt the godly spirit of the Baptist's fearless appeal.

Unfortunately, however, an opportunity came for that wicked woman, Herodias, to do her worst. It was Herod's birthday; he 'made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates (chief men) of Galilee, and when the daughter of the said Herodias came in and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee.' She went forth unto her mother, and asked her what she was to ask, and her mother, burning for revenge, promptly said, 'The head of John the Baptist.' Straightway with haste the damsel went unto the king, and stated that she desired him to give her, in a charger, the head of John the Baptist. The king was exceedingly sorry, yet, for his oath's sake, and for the sake of them that sat with him, he would not reject her. He ordered one of his bodyguard to bring John the Baptist's head. This man went to the prison and beheaded him. He brought in the head of John the Baptist in a charger (*i.e.*, a dish), gave it to the damsel, and she presented it to her mother.

When this terrible crime got noised abroad, John's disciples came and took up his corpse and laid it in a tomb. John had brought on himself this death, by fearlessly doing his duty and deliberately rebuking the vicious king for his sin, a rebuke which was the mandate of God. It is quite possible that the question might occur to him, just as it does to all of us, why God allowed him to languish in Herod's gloomy prison, while our Lord was actually then on earth, He who had only to say the word, and to set him free immediately. God's ways are not our ways. We must accept such apparent victories of evil as the mysterious part of His wise purposes, who alone sees the end from the beginning.

As to John the Baptist, we sympathise with him in what he had suffered in the dungeon—he, the open-air prophet, he, who had roamed about for so long in the freedom of the wilderness. We read that John, while in prison, had sent two of his disciples to ask of Jesus, 'Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?' This doubt of our Lord's Messiahship was very natural, and may have come partly from the distorted reports of Jesus' teaching John heard in the prison, and partly from the long gloom of his hopeless imprisonment, or the doubt may have been merely on the part of the disciples and not felt by John. Jesus answered by pointing to his works: 'The blind receive their sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them.' Doubtless the reply of Jesus, the appeal to the facts, convinced not only John, but his disciples, and comforted the great prophet before his

death. One of the earliest and best of Italian artists has painted this picture we have before us. The original of this superb work of art is in that glorious church of Santa Croce, that storehouse of exquisite beauty. The meaning of this picture is the triumph of goodness even in death.

We have spoken about Baptism among the Jews as a rite of initiation, and we have seen what was the baptism of John. That baptism was symbolical and preparatory, and not sacramental. Just as our Lord for a short time at the opening of His ministry continued John's preaching, so for a time the disciples of Christ baptized as a continuance of the baptism of John. This baptism was not 'into the name of the Lord Jesus.'

We may observe that in sending out the Twelve Apostles, and in sending out the Seventy, our Lord gave no command to baptize. The reason is plain, if Baptism, till after our Lord's Resurrection, when the formal commission to baptize was given, was as we have said, preparatory to entrance into the Kingdom, a symbol, and not a sacrament that confers grace. Christian Baptism, as we possess it, begins with our Lord's great commission to His Church, when He met them by appointment on the mountain in Galilee, and commanded them: 'Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost' (Matthew xxviii. verse 19). (R.V., 'Go ye therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name.')

It was not till the Church received the gift of the Spirit at Pentecost, that St. Peter urged the Jews to 'repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost' (Acts ii. verse 38). Christian baptism then, being based on a distinct command of the Risen Lord, is binding on all Christians. It is a plain command, and was so understood by the first Christians who heard it given, and it has been so understood and carried out by the various branches of the universal Church of Christ ever since.

Children are brought to baptism as an act of obedience to this command of Christ, and to deprive them of baptism is to deprive them of the high privilege of membership in the Church of Christ, who said: 'Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for such is the kingdom of God' (Mark x. verse 14).

CHAPTER XXI.

THE GOSPELS (THE SILENT YEARS OF PREPARATION—THE BAPTISM— THE TEMPTATION—THE FOUNDING OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST).

IN the beginning of last chapter we said that there was a gap in the recorded memories of Our Lord's life from His twelfth to His thirtieth year. This is easily accounted for. The memories of the Apostles, who were with the Lord throughout His ministry, extended only to that ministry. Their witness-bearing consisted of what they saw and heard of His doings and His teachings during that period. There was a natural desire, however, to know something of our Lord's earlier life, and from His mother, and other sources, the facts as to His birth and infancy were obtained, and are recorded in the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke. That there is no distinct record after the twelfth year till the time of His baptism, is probably due to the fact that nothing eventful was known to the members of the Holy Family or to relations and friends. But there are allusions scattered through the narrative of the Gospels, and passages in our Lord's parables and other teachings, which when brought together give us some idea how these silent years of preparation were spent.

It is plain, to begin with, that our Lord had a deeply religious mother, one whose mind was stored with the best of the contents of the Old Testament. To remember the Magnificat alone, is enough to assure us of this. That His mother was also a woman of rare thoughtfulness is proved by the way she pondered over her own mysterious experiences, and as time went on over her mysterious relationship as a human mother to her Divine Son. In such a thoughtful and meditative nature as our Lord's mother, it is not surprising to find the delicate and dignified reticence which revealed the secret of the wondrous birth only after many years, long after the Resurrection and Ascension. The impression she made is seen in the unanimous tradition that she remained till her death devoted to the life of virginity, to which she seems to have given herself by her betrothed's consent before the birth of our Lord (*cf.* Luke i. verse 34). And not only was the Blessed Virgin a religious woman, but Joseph, the head of the household at Nazareth, was one that feared God, as we are told.

Under such influences the Child Jesus developed from childhood to youth, and from youth to manhood. He was well known to His fellow-villagers as Jesus the Carpenter (Mark vi. 3), working with Joseph at his trade. He attended the services of the Synagogue, and listened to the reading of Moses and the Prophets, and, at a later date, was in the habit of reading the lessons of Scripture Himself, when invited to do so by the ruler of the Synagogue. His intimate knowledge of the Old Testament is evident throughout His teaching a knowledge which could only have been acquired by a life-long study. His frequent quotations from the Scriptures show that He generally used the Greek version, but that He was able to read them in the original Hebrew, such a passage as Matthew v. verse 18, with such expressions as one jot or one tittle seem to show ('jot,' the Greek 'iota,' represents 'yod,' which is the smallest letter in Hebrew; 'tittle' represents one of the tiny horns by which Hebrew letters are distinguished).

Of our Lord's companions in His home life, and their relations with Him, there are very few indications. We gather that His four brothers and three sisters were really step-brothers and step-sisters, children of Joseph by a previous marriage (the view of St. Epiphanius supported by Lightfoot in England). Of these, the names of James and Jude are more familiar than those of Simon and Joses (*i.e.*, Joseph) among our Lord's brethren.

There were other influences that went to prepare our Lord's mind for His coming work. His sayings, especially in the Parables, reveal extraordinary sympathy with, and knowledge of, human character, and a sympathy scarcely less deep with external nature. The secret of His matchless sympathy was, that He saw God in both and both in God. He had entered with interest into every detail of the life of the mountain villages and the lakeside towns, and He used what He had observed to illustrate His teaching. He saw the evil in the world better than any one, but He loved the world nevertheless and longed to deliver it. This longing must have been working in His mind for years, before He came to John to be baptized as the introduction to the work of His Messiahship. As to His sympathy with nature, there is ample evidence in the illustrations with which He filled His teaching. A sensitive eye and heart is revealed in such allusions as those to the lilies of the field and the birds of the air. And above all these influences, and conditioning them all, was the supreme influence, the mighty mystery of His union with God, which gave Him a constant and intense consciousness of God's nearness, which, even as we can dimly perceive it in the brief and fragmentary records of His words and deeds in the

Gospels, is seen to be altogether unique; that is, like nothing that had been in the world before or has been seen since.

Our Lord had insisted on John's baptizing Him, though John, perceiving how greatly superior to himself was this new candidate for baptism, was unwilling. As He came up out of the water, the Vision of the dove-like Holy Spirit and the Voice from Heaven were given as unmistakable proof of His Messiahship. With these signs the life of our Lord as the Messiah had begun. The first step in that life was not what might have been expected. The Spirit which had descended upon Him at His Baptism drove Him into the Wilderness. St. Mark says, in chapter i. verses 12, 13: 'And immediately the spirit driveth him into the wilderness. And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.' The wilderness was inhabited by wild animals. Our Lord lived in their midst. They must have found very soon, by experience, that He meant them no harm; that He was not come to hunt them or to slaughter them, like most men they were accustomed to meet.

Our Lord's Life is the one Perfect Life. It sets before us, as our example, God's ideal of man perfectly realised. The imitation of Christ is admitted by all Christians to be the duty of His followers. In this particular point of the proper attitude of man to animals, that example of our Lord is especially necessary. The prophet Isaiah, in chapter xi. verses 6-9, sets forth, as a part of the bright future towards which man is travelling, the reign of peace, not only between man and man, but also between man and animal. And this confidence of the wild animals in our Lord has not stopped at Him, but has extended itself to some of his followers. A long series of stories witnesses to the peaceful friendship that has existed between holy hermits, in the early ages of Christianity, and the wild animals with whom they were brought into contact. A more modern instance, and one really well authenticated, is St. Francis of Assisi, whose influence over wild animals, even over such wild beasts as the wolf of Agobis, whom he called his brother, the wolf, is well known.

While still in His boyhood, the tokens of our Lord's consciousness of His unique relation to the Father were unmistakable. But in the deliberate step of coming to John for baptism, we see His resolve to enter upon His public ministry, and the witness of the baptism left Him no doubt that He was to be the Messiah, the King and the Saviour who was to establish the Kingdom of God. With the resolve to carry out this mission, the question must have arisen: how was it to be done? There were many ways that would sug-

gest themselves, and the most obvious was to use the Messianic expectation as He found it among the people; to make concessions to, or to accept, the conception of an earthly kingdom founded on force, which was firmly established, as we have seen, by the great national success under Judas Maccabæus in the past, and by the pressure of the scornful Roman rule in the present. Our Lord was conscious of new powers in Himself. With the consciousness came the question how He was to use them. He felt that the Spirit of God in Him could give Him power to do anything.

Then there came another spirit, the Spirit of Evil, personified in part of the Old Testament as well as in the New, under the name of Satan, and began to suggest a use of the powers given by the good Spirit of God, which was not in accordance with that good Spirit. Our Lord was human, as well as Divine; Perfect Man as well as Perfect God. His humanity made the Temptation, or testing time, possible and necessary. His purpose of establishing, as the Messiah, the Kingdom of God, required that a definite plan of action should be thought out; and solitude, apart from all human advice or interference, as the position to which the Holy Spirit directed our Lord. Good men have before now been tempted to seek to attain to a good end by means that are not good, and many have yielded to the temptation. This kind of temptation is that which the Evil Spirit uses to assail high natures, which are above the reach of common forms of selfishness or self-indulgence. The human nature of our Lord made temptation possible. His mission as the Messiah made it necessary. The key to the right understanding of our Lord's Temptation is to be found in the inspired words of Scripture (Hebrews iv. verse 15): 'For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.'

Our temptations, like those of our Lord, begin by inner impulses formed under unseen influences, and issuing in the inner choice between good and evil. The battle is fought, and lost or won within us, before the results of the inner struggle find expression in outward life. The form taken by the accounts of our Lord's Temptation in the Gospels comes from an Eastern mould. A symbolical picture is given of a real experience, probably because the same shape had been given to the story of the Temptation and Fall of Man in Genesis.

After fasting forty days, our Lord's human imagination was naturally filled with visions of food, for which his exhausted body felt an intense craving. The stones of the wilderness to hungry eyes might suggest loaves of bread. The evil spirit used the opportunity

(Matthew iv. verse 3). 'And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.' Our Lord must have been almost worn out with His forty days' fast, and had He hesitated, and had He parleyed with temptation, He might have said to Himself, surely it is right to use the Messiah's power to preserve the Messiah's life. But He felt, as He always after felt, that He could not rightly use His wondrous powers to help Himself, but only to help others. His answer to the Evil Spirit conveys a profound lesson to us. He used the Bible, safely stored in His memory, to overcome this subtle temptation (Matthew iv. verse 4): 'But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.'

This is a happy use of one of our Lord's best-loved books—Deuteronomy (viii. verse 3). This was the first Temptation. The sword of the Spirit—the Word of God—in our Lord's hand, repulsed the tempter's attack. But the evil spirit had not exhausted his devices. He took Jesus with him in imagination to a pinnacle of the Temple, and urged Him to cast Himself down, and leave it to God to bring Him safely out of the danger. This would have been to substitute presumption for faith; to break God's natural law, and to expect God to prevent the consequences by direct intervention. Again, our Lord used the sword of the Spirit to repulse this new attack (Matthew iv. verse 7): '. . . It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.' This is a fine reminiscence of Deuteronomy vi. 16.

Once more the evil spirit took our Lord up in imagination to an exceeding high mountain, from which a vision shaped itself of all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. His offer was, 'All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me' (Matthew iv. verse 9). The meaning of this was that Jesus was to take a short cut to gain power and wealth for the good end He had in view, and to do this would have been to serve and worship the Evil One, albeit for the establishment of God's kingdom on earth. This would have been the case had he used the Messianic hope of the Jews, by putting Himself at their head and expelling the Romans, and so establishing by the sword an earthly kingdom. Our Lord again used His knowledge of the Bible to repulse the Tempter. Matthew iv. verse 10: 'It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.' This is taken from Deuteronomy x. verse 20.

The lessons for us in our Lord's temptation are manifold. We can only find space for a few. The first lesson is promptness in our

resistance to evil. We must be ready to resist the moment temptation comes. Secondly we must be ready with our Bible. We must know and love it so well that it has become embedded in our memory, so that we can refer to it immediately in all the difficulties of life. We must have formed the habit of studying it with this practical purpose, and gained facility in using its contents. Promptness in resisting evil is St. James's advice: 'Resist the devil, and he will flee from you' (James iv. verse 7). As our Lord overcame, so are we also in our turn to overcome, obtaining help through His example.

Matthew iv. verse 11: 'Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.'

After the Temptation our Lord returned to the Jordan valley, and seems to have remained in that neighbourhood, which was not very far from Nazareth, for some time. Then one day John, who was still baptizing, saw Jesus coming to him, and looking on Him intently said, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world' (John i. verse 29). Nothing appears to have followed. These and many other words of the Baptist reveal a remarkable identification of the suffering Servant of God (predicted in Isaiah liii.) with Jesus, whom he had baptized.

John i. verses 35-42: 'Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest Thou? He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus.'

The passage which we have just given describes an event which seemed without much significance at the time, but was fraught with far-reaching consequences. When John and Andrew, the two disciples of the Baptist, left their master to join themselves to Jesus, the Christian Church came into existence. These two were the first Christians, the first disciples of the new teacher, whom by the next day they had recognised to be the Messiah. John and Andrew had been trained by the Baptist, and they joined Jesus as the result of the Baptist's suggestion. He did not tell them to go,

but we can see that he meant them to follow Jesus when, earnestly gazing on Him, he said, 'Behold the Lamb of God.'

To these two first Christians were soon added more, for the Christian Church began to grow as soon as it was born. Philip and Nathaniel were among the first. This was only the beginning, and the Church was not yet fully organized. The next step took place at Capernaum some time after, when Jesus called Simon Peter, and Andrew his brother, to leave their fishing on the lake and all their possessions, and follow Him. With them he called their partners, James and John, the sons of Zebedee; and these four disciples, thus separated from the world to give themselves to Jesus, were the nucleus of the visible Church. These were the four chief Apostles. We give St. Mark's account in chapter i. verses 16-20: 'Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me and, I will make you to become fishers of men. And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him. And when he had gone a little farther thence, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets. And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him.'

Then came the calling of Matthew, the customs' collector at Capernaum, of which we must give a fuller account presently; and this was quickly followed by the call of the rest of the Twelve Apostles. The call to leave their homes and their business to be with Christ, and to be sent forth in His service, was made first, as we have seen, to two pairs of brothers, Peter and Andrew, James and John, and was gradually extended to Matthew and to the rest until the number reached twelve. We give St. Mark's account of the call (chapter iii, verses 13-19): 'And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him. And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils: and Simon he surnamed Peter; and James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder: and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphæus, and Thaddæus, and Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed him.'

As to these names, it is enough to say that Bartholomew (*i.e.*, the son of Tolmai) is identified with Nathanael; Simon the Cana-

anæan (R.V.) was one of the Zealots; Judas Iscariot was a native of Kerieth in Judæa. Of what class were these twelve Apostles composed? Though they belonged to the middle and lower classes, some of them were in comfortable positions. The fishermen were owners of boats on the lake, and Zebedee, the father of James and John, had 'hired servants.' John had an acquaintanceship with the high priest and had a house at Jerusalem. Matthew was a customs' collector. Simon the Canaanite belonged to the nationalist party. The Twelve were far from understanding our Lord's teaching at once. It was given to them to know the mysteries of the Kingdom as He told them, but only very gradually. After some training he sent them out as Missionaries—*i.e.*, Apostles—to the country parts to do a work of healing, when He was not able to go Himself, and to preach, saying: 'The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.' This simple heralding of the coming of the King in His Kingdom, seems to have been the whole Apostolic message; at first probably because the Apostles were not capable as yet of more advanced teaching.

A further mission is mentioned in one Gospel only. St. Luke tells of the sending of the Twelve, and he also tells us of the sending of the Seventy. The instructions our Lord gave are practically the same in both cases. This second sending seems to indicate the missionary use by our Lord of a wider circle of disciples. A great deal of our Lord's time appears to have been spent in the direction of the inner circle of His disciples. One of the main purposes of His life was to educate a brotherhood of followers, who would form the nucleus of the Christian Church, and, possessed by their Lord.

spirit, would continue and extend the Incarnation among mankind. The Incarnation begun with Christ was to be extended, as far as might be, to every one who accepted Christ as Lord, and the body of believers were to supply a body for the spirit of Christ, and so to represent Him on earth, after He had ascended to the right hand of God.

Andrew's words to his brother, Simon Peter, 'We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ' (John i. verse 41), fairly express the attitude of the disciples towards the new Master whom they had found. Living continually with Him, going about with Him from place to place, they came to know Him well, and were brought very fully under His influence. They had a genuine affection for Him, and a deep reverence, though they did not understand Him. Indeed, they continually misunderstood both His teaching and His actions: they were unable to rise to His

level. This was one of His incessant trials. The imperfection of their understanding limited their sympathy. They drew from their Master, not once or twice, such remonstrances as this: 'Are ye also yet without understanding?' (Matthew xv. verse 16). He had to explain His meaning to them again and again, as we learn from the Gospels, which, be it remembered, do not profess to be complete histories of our Lord's life, but merely fragmentary reminiscences of what His disciples had seen and heard, and handed down as an oral tradition years before the Gospels were written.

Our Lord's human yearning for sympathy found, after a time, some answer in three disciples (two of whom were the first to come to Him), Peter, James, and John, who became a sort of inner circle in the Brotherhood, and to whom our Lord looked for support on special occasions. One of them, John, rose from discipleship to intimate friendship, and was known as the disciple whom Jesus loved. John is the disciple who was 'lying on Jesus' breast' (John xiii. verse 25) at the Last Supper, through whom always, as on this occasion, the other disciples sought any special information they desired from their Lord. John was the disciple to whom, as His most trusted friend, Jesus, from the Cross, confided the care of His beloved Mother; and John took her home after that heart-rending agony, which only a devoted mother's love could know.

John's father's name was Zebedee, and that of his mother was Salome. It is most probable that she was the sister of the Blessed Virgin Mary. We know that she was one of the good women who occupied herself with the comfort of Jesus, and who believed in Him from the first.

A short time ago we looked at a picture of St. John. In works of art we see him always pictured with an eagle. Each of the four Evangelists has his own special emblem. In regard to the eagle of St. John, we know that this bird easily soars to the greatest heights, and delights to do so. It is a beautiful thought that our Evangelist also is one who loved to soar upward towards heaven, and finds his native atmosphere there. This friend who lay on Jesus' breast knew most of his Master's heart, and best reveals it in his words. John had a far higher and truer conception of his Lord's Divinity than any of the other Evangelists. This conception is set forth very finely in the beginning of his Gospel. John i. verses 1-5: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the

life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.'

Not less beautiful are his words about our Lord in the beginning of his first Epistle, chapter i. verses 1-3: 'That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.'

We have spoken about St. John, who was one of the four chief Apostles. His brother James occupies a minor place, as does Peter's brother, Andrew. Peter himself was the first of the Apostles in active life, as John was first in thought and feeling; Peter was a man of great energy and promptitude in action. Our Lord, whose marvellous insight at once read the character of a man, saw this when Andrew first brought his brother to Him (John i. verse 42): 'And when Jesus beheld him, he said . . . thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone.' The meaning of this was that Peter would be a rock in the strength of his devotion to a cause he espoused. But temptation disclosed many defects in the rock-man. He proved unstable again and again as we shall see; yet always returned to his first position, and in the end justified the name which the Lord had given him.

Peter's chief weaknesses were pride, rash self-confidence, and fear of ridicule, and till those were removed by his heartfelt repentance after the great denial, he was hindered in the following of his Lord. His Lord's free forgiveness and generous trust after his failure made him a new man. He ceased to trust himself, or think of himself. He trusted in and thought only of his Lord. But he retained the innate weak tendency of his character, and incurred the rebuke of St. Paul (Galatians ii. verse 11). Peter, however, was the first to confess his Lord's divinity (Matthew xvi. 16), and on St. Peter, as thus confessing his Lord's divinity, the Church was founded, Peter, as the representative Apostle, sharing all powers with the rest.

Of the many traditions which have gathered round St. Peter, one of the most touching and the most in keeping with his character, is that which represents him as fleeing from the persecution in Rome, and met on the road by our Lord, who said: 'I go to Rome to be crucified again for thee.' Whereupon, the **tradition** tells us,

St. Peter turned back and fearlessly met his death by crucifixion. The story tells us that he thought it too much honour to be crucified in the same manner as his Lord, and by his own request, he was nailed on the cross with his head down.

Having given some account of the calling of the Christian Church, and the sending forth of the first Apostles or Missionaries, to preach the Kingdom of God, for which purpose we have taken occurrences somewhat out of their order in point of time, we will now prepare the way for some account of our Lord's Life, by considering two of its characteristics. His Life consisted of His Words and His Deeds. Looking at His Words, we find He very commonly chose Parables, as the most effective means of impressing His teaching upon His hearers. Looking at His Deeds, we find that He taught most powerfully by the wonderful works or signs which we call the Miracles.

The shortest description of a Parable is, an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. The word Parable is derived from a Greek word, meaning, to put a thing beside another, to compare. To take the things that are known to explain the things which are less known, or unknown, is a method which commends itself both to the reason and the experience; and this is the method of the Parables. The familiar things of earth are used in our Lord's parables to suggest and to explain the unfamiliar spiritual things of heaven. So intimately were parables interwoven in our Lord's teaching, that we are sometimes told by the Evangelists: 'Without a parable spake He not unto them' (Matthew xiii. verse 34; Mark iv. verse 34).

Parables were perfectly familiar to our Lord's hearers. Easterns are accustomed to this mode of teaching. The love of the story, common to all mankind, is specially strong in the East, and our Lord's parables used the love of the story to attract the mind, and to introduce it insensibly to deeper and more difficult things. Our Lord had a further special reason for using the parable. The story form was a magnet to all, but only those who used their own minds, and only those who had ears to hear, could reach the meaning. It must be remembered that our Lord wrote nothing, as far as we know, except once when He stooped down and wrote upon the fround. His teaching was spoken, and He trusted to the memory of those who heard it, and the wonderful Gospels are the justification of His trust.

What has been pictured in the imagination is by most people more easily remembered than mere words, for the picture in the mind serves to call up by association the words by which it was

first impressed on the imagination. Again, words are continually changing their meaning, whereas the life of man and the life of nature are essentially the same at all times and in all lands, and the pictures of life and nature by which our Lord conveyed spiritual truth are as lasting as mankind. Moreover, while the immediate meaning to the first hearers must be fully grasped, there is an inexhaustible depth of meaning in our Lord's parables, separating them from other parables, which enables them to supply the needs, not of one generation, but of all generations, and this may be ascribed to the fact of the mystery of our Lord's double nature, that He was God as well as Man.

There are no parables, strictly speaking, in St. John's Gospel, though there are a number of sayings resembling parables, as when our Lord speaks of Himself as the Good Shepherd, the Door of the Sheep, the True Vine, the Light of the World. The parables Matthew, Mark, and Luke have in common are three: the Sower, the Grain of Mustard Seed, the Wicked Husbandmen. The parables Matthew and Luke have in common are two: the Leaven, and the Lost Sheep.

A single parable is peculiar to Mark: the seed springing up imperceptibly. Matthew has ten parables peculiar to his Gospel and Luke has eighteen. The latter collection is the largest one, and it contains those most beautiful parables, the Prodigal Son and the Good Samaritan.

There are thirty of our Lord's parables or thereabouts. A list of them may be helpful. We use Trench's *Notes on the Parables*.

The sower (Matthew xiii. verse 3; Mark iv. verse 3; Luke viii. verse 5).

The tares (Matthew xiii. verse 24).

The grain of mustard seed (Matthew xiii. verse 31; Mark iv. verse 31; Luke xiii. verse 19).

The leaven (Matthew xiii. verse 33; Luke xiii. verse 21).

The hidden treasure (Matthew xiii. verse 44).

The precious pearl (Matthew xiii. verse 45).

The net (Matthew xiii. verse 47).

The unmerciful servant (Matthew xviii. verse 23).

The labourers in the vineyard (Matthew xx. verse 1).

The two sons (Matthew xxi. verse 28).

The vineyard (Matthew xxi. verse 33; Mark xii. verse 1; Luke xx. verse 9).

The marriage feast (Matthew xxii. verse 1).

The ten virgins (Matthew xxv. verse 1).

The talents (Matthew xxv. verse 14).

The seed springing up imperceptibly (Mark iv. verse 26).
 The two debtors (Luke vii. verse 41).
 The good Samaritan (Luke x. verse 30).
 The friend at midnight (Luke xi. verse 5).
 The rich fool (Luke xii. verse 16).
 The barren fig-tree (Luke xiii. verse 6).
 The great supper (Luke xiv. verse 15).
 The lost sheep (Luke xv. verse 4; Matthew xviii. verse 12).
 The lost piece of money (Luke xv. verse 8).
 The prodigal son (Luke xv. verse 11).
 The dishonest steward (Luke xvi. verse 1).
 The rich man and Lazarus (Luke xvi. verse 19).
 The chief seats (Luke xiv. verse 7).
 The unprofitable servants (Luke xvii. verse 7).
 The unjust judge (Luke xviii. verse 1).
 The Pharisee and the publican (Luke xviii. verse 9).
 The pounds (Luke xix. verse 12).

We now turn to the miracles which were an essential part of our Lord's teaching. His purpose was to reveal God. 'No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son ('God only begotten,' R.M.), which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him' (John i. 18). The whole narrative of the Gospels is so closely interwoven with miracles that it is impossible to retain an unmutated picture of the historic Christ if the miracles be eliminated. Again, if the miracles be removed, the belief of Christians from the first that Christ was God is made altogether inexplicable. Our Lord claimed to be one with God, and if He was what He claimed to be there was nothing unnatural in His working of miracles. He was at home in two worlds, the seen and the unseen. He brought the powers of the unseen world to bear upon the seen. It is quite what might be expected that a superhuman personality like our Lord's should express itself in works as well as in words that are beyond the reach of man. There is a deep underlying unity in all the miracles of Christ, which comes from the fact that they proceed from and reveal the most profound miracle of all, the supernatural Person of Christ.

A miracle means something wonderful, something that cannot be explained by the known laws of nature, but does not necessarily involve a breach of those known laws. It may be brought about by the action of higher laws as yet unknown to us. When the philosopher faces us with the statement that miracles do not occur, he by no means establishes the position that they have never occurred in **the past**. The miracles of Christ are miracles which

were, as we have seen, quite natural as the expression of His unique personality. And after all, is the statement that miracles do not occur tenable when carefully examined? Do we believe that only those events and those things are true which we are able to explain? Are we able to solve the mystery of the universe, or even the mystery of ourselves? What, where, and whence is the power of individual life in the seed? What, where, and whence is the human soul? What, and where, and whence is the life in a wheat plant or in a new-born infant? As we examine into familiar things like these, the element of mystery in them grows before our eyes. We realise with Hamlet that 'there are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.'

A careful examination of the Gospels proves that we cannot preserve the vivid and convincing life of the narrative if we leave out the miracles, nor can we retain one class of miracles, the miracles of healing wrought upon man, and remove those wrought upon nature; for the earliest Gospel, that of St. Mark, contains these very nature miracles ingrained in the narrative.

When we come to look at the miracles more closely, one by one, we shall see that they are as St. John calls them, Signs, visible actions by which the Invisible Being makes Himself known, and makes Himself known as Love. For compassionate love is the motive power of the miracles.

The miracles may be divided into two classes: miracles wrought on man and miracles wrought on nature. In the case of man, faith was required in the persons for whom the miracle was performed. It was usually in the open air, by the lakeside, or on the slopes of the encircling hills, that Christ performed them. We read in the Gospels detailed accounts of over Thirty miracles; we shall presently give a list of them, and the places in the New Testament where to find them recorded in detail, but many more were performed which no attempt is made to describe, as the following passage plainly intimates.

Mark i. verses 32-34: 'And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. And all the city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him.'

Miracles wrought on man:

Cures of men possessed with devils (Matthew viii. verse 28; xv. verse 21; and xvii. verse 14; Mark i. verse 23).

The Centurion's servant (Matthew viii. verse 5).

The impotent man at Bethesda (John v. verse 9).

The man with withered hand (Matthew xii. verse 10).

The woman with spirit of infirmity for eighteen years (Luke xiii. 11).

The dumb man with a devil (Matthew ix. verse 32).

The blind and dumb man with a devil (Matthew xii. verse 22).

The boy possessed with a devil (Mark ix. verse 14).

The demoniac in the country of the Gerasenes or Gadarenes (Mark v. 1).

The healing of the paralysed (Matthey viii. verse 5, and ix. verse 2).

The canaanite woman's daughter (Mark vii. verse 25).

The deaf man (Mark vii. verse 32).

The blind (Matthew ix. verse 27, and xx. verse 30; Mark viii. verse 22; John ix. verse 1).

Blind Bartimæus (Mark x. verse 46).

The man with the dropsy (Luke xiv. verse 2).

Peter's wife's mother (Matthew viii. verse 14).

The issue of blood (Matthew ix. verse 20).

The lepers (Matthew viii. verse 3; Mark i. verse 40; Luke xvii. verse 11).

The healing of the High Priest's servant's ear (Luke xxii. verse 50).

The recovery of nobleman's son at Capernaum (John iv. verse 46).

Many of these miracles of healing were very wonderful—*e.g.*, healing of leprosy with the touch or by the word of power; the removal of hopeless paralysis by a word. But the supreme instances of Divine power shown in miracles wrought on man are the three cases of raising the dead to life: the raising of Jairus's daughter (Mark v. verses 35-43), the raising from the bier of the only son of the widow of Nain (Luke vii. verse 11), the raising from the grave of Lazarus, four days dead (John xi. verse 43).

The miracles wrought upon nature were:

The stilling of the storm (Matthew viii. verse 26).

The walking on the sea (Matthew xiv. verse 25).

The blasting of the fig-tree (Matthew xxi. verse 18).

The turning of water into wine at Cana (John ii. verse 1).

The feeding of five thousand (Matthew xiv. verse 19).

The feeding of four thousand (Matthew xv. verse 32).

There are also miracles, which might be miracles or might be cases of our Lord's wonderful wisdom, such as the great draught

of fishes (Luke v. verse 1, and John xxi. verse 6), and the finding of the coin in the fish's mouth (Matthew xvii. verse 24).

A point which must not be forgotten is that the last great miracle of the Resurrection helps our understanding of, and faith in, all the other miracles. The proofs of the Resurrection are cumulative. We have the evidence of St. Paul in his great Epistles to the universal acceptance by Christians of the Revelation of the Risen Lord, and the corroboration, at a later date, by the recollections of the Lord's appearances recorded in the Gospels. We have also the evidence of a sudden change of world-wide importance, by which the fearful and dismayed disciples of the crucified Christ were converted into the fearless and confident believers, the watchword of whose teaching was summed up by St. Paul's Athenian adversaries as 'Jesus and the Resurrection.'

To this evidence may be added the taking of the first day of the week, the Lord's Day, as St. John calls it in the earliest of his writings, as the sacred day of the Christian Church, which can only be explained by the actual appearances which proved the fact of the Resurrection and made the new day and the new Church predominant over the old.

Now, the evidence which has verified the facts of the supreme miracle of the Resurrection, substantiates the lesser evidence for the miracles of the Gospel. It is probable, and natural, that He who showed Himself to be the Risen Lord should have performed the miracles we find in the Evangelists. The evidence of St. Paul to the continuance of miracles in the Christian Church of his day is very important. He was not only aware of miracles performed by others, he knew that he had performed, and continued to perform, miracles himself. He refers to these miracles of his own, as known to all his readers, appealing to what they had seen; for instance, he says to the Corinthians (2 Cor. xii. verse 12) that 'the signs of an apostle were wrought among you, in all patience, by signs and wonders, and mighty works.' If his readers at Corinth had not seen these miracles, it is incredible that he would have written to them and reminded them of their experience. It follows that if the humble apostle, the slave of Christ, as he called himself, could perform miracles by the Power of the Risen Christ, how much more his wonderful and mighty Master.

CHAPTER XXII

THE GOSPELS (JESUS AT NAZARETH—AT CANA—AT CAPERNAUM—
AT JERUSALEM—WITH NICODEMUS—AT SYCHAR—A WOMAN OF
SAMARIA).

At the time with which this chapter deals, Jesus had not left His home at Nazareth. It was nine miles thence to Cana, where He visited the Marriage Feast, with His mother and His disciples. The mother of Jesus said to her Son that the wine was finished. These words were the words of one who had reason to know that her Son was no ordinary man. That she expected something is plain, for though her Son's answer gave no encouragement to interference on her part, she turned aside to the servants and said, 'Whatsoever he saith unto you do it' (St. John ii. verse 5). There stood near six waterpots of stone—huge ones, such as are used all over the Holy Land, in which the water remains fresh and cool. Jesus commanded the servants to fill these water-jars with water. This was done. Then our Lord commanded them, 'Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast' (verse 8). And again they obeyed. The governor drank of the wine and knew not whence it came. He only knew that it was better wine than he had drunk before. Everybody saw for themselves what had happened. Thus was His glory manifested, and His disciples believed on Him.

In this miracle we see the same power that changes the water of the skies into wine, through the gradual processes that make vine-sap and grape-juice in their order, changing water into wine without the intervening processes. Both works are wonderful; both are God's works, but the latter we call miraculous, because it is above our common experience. 'My Father worketh hitherto ('even until now,' R.V.), and I work' (St. John v. verse 17).

What a contrast it was for our Lord to mingle here with a pleasure-seeking and joyous marriage crowd, after His sad days of utter loneliness and privation in the desert. It matters not what it is that comes to our Lord's experience during His life on earth, each opportunity is turned to the very best account; no chance is ever lost of doing His Father's will and of showing forth His honour and glory, be it among the happy or among the sad. It must be remembered that our Lord was no ascetic, and His Christianity was not and is not asceticism.

St. John ii. verse 11: 'This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.' The word 'miracles' here is a mistranslation for 'signs' (R.V.), St. John's pregnant word for miracles. This sign revealed the truth of God's presence in Christ, and God's working through Christ in outward nature. The satisfaction of bodily wants by God is the first lesson, which is to carry on the readers of the story to seek in Him the satisfaction of spiritual wants. St. John describes the effect of the sign or miracle to be twofold: first a manifestation of Christ's glory, and next a foundation of faith in His disciples. He did not refuse to share the rich Pharisee's banquet or the poor fisherman's bread; the house of mourning knew Him, as also the house of joy; for example, this marriage feast. He showed that neither wealth nor poverty are necessary conditions of the citizenship of that Kingdom of God, but the state of the heart, the righteousness, joy, and peace which are within.

After this our Lord went to Capernaum with His mother, His brethren, and His disciples; but the fact that He stayed not many days is probably inserted by St. John to show that He had not yet taken up His residence there.

From Capernaum He went to Jerusalem for the Passover with some of His disciples. St. John ii. verses 14-16: 'And he found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: and when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; and said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise.' This expulsion of the buyers and sellers from the outer court of the Temple was a deliberate act, intended as a public declaration that the young Prophet had a mission to Israel, and we see that the declaration was suitably made at the centre of national worship. By this everybody would know that Jesus claimed to be a religious reformer like the old Prophets.

Seeing in Christ's action a claim to exercise high prophetic functions, the Jews asked for some evidence as to His right to do those things which belong to a great Prophet's work. They asked for a sign or token to support His claim. By way of satisfying their demand for a sign, He uses a comparison which compares the Temple with Himself. St. John ii. verse 19: 'Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.'

The Jews, misunderstanding the meaning of this, objected. Full

well they knew that their Temple had already taken forty and six years to build. How, then, could any one raise it up in three days? But He was not speaking of a temple built by the hand of man, but of His own body. St. John, when he wrote, perceived that his Master had, when He spoke, foreseen His Death and His Resurrection within three days, which was at the time hidden from His disciples. St. John ii. verse 22: 'When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scriptures, and the word which Jesus had said.' His stay at Jerusalem was not without effect, for we read in St. John's account, 'many believed in his name when they saw the miracles which he did' (ii verse 23).

In St. John iii. we read, 'There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.' He was a member of the learned religious council of the nation called the Sanhedrin. All the council were experts on points of Jewish law, and governed the Jewish people under the Roman Empire. St. John iii. verse 2: 'The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi [Teacher], we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.'

We wonder while reading this, why Nicodemus chose the night to visit Jesus. Surely the days were fully occupied for the all-helping Friend of man, and it was hardly fair to break in upon the privacy and quiet of His night. Nicodemus must have had a very special reason. The reason was probably fear of adverse criticism. The Jews were proud; they thought they knew as much as was necessary. Nicodemus would have been harshly judged and severely condemned, had it been known that he was asking advice from the Prophet of Nazareth. But as against all this, Nicodemus acted on the impulse of his heart which had been touched. An irresistible attraction had taken possession of him towards this marvellous Teacher. Under the star-lit canopy of heaven, perhaps on the flat roof of the house that held Jesus, we can imagine Nicodemus speaking to the Master, drinking in the words of wisdom coming from the Divine lips. Nicodemus was a man of position; looked on as one in authority; a ruler of men. As Jesus spoke to him, high possibilities of a life opened out before him; this life, which all of us may live by the grace of God. Ought not all of us in the silence of the night to come apart from the world to our Lord and Master, and hold converse in prayer with Him?

Jesus said to him: 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God' (St. John iii.

verse 3). This word 'verily'—that is, 'truly'—in the New Testament reminds us rather of the Old Testament expression: 'Thus saith the Lord.' Both are pronounced with full authority and assurance in their respective places. Jesus teaches us to review our everyday life; and once we look below the surface, according to His instructions, He gives us the right direction. Nicodemus asked and required an explanation. Naturally we are but once born into this world. To our great consolation, our inner man is fashioned in such a way that we are able to make many new starts. When we find ourselves on the wrong road, we are happily able to pull up, and turn our heads in the opposite direction; this is the great advantage that our inner man has over our outer. Our body has a limited being. Free will belongs to our inner man alone. In order more fully to explain what the 'New Birth' means, we will take a homely illustration; for nothing is too simple, so long as we learn from it. It is a true story. A lady had a class, and there gathered at her house different grades of scholars, among them being a princess and a servant. All in common were taught about our Lord Jesus Christ, teaching which received in faith unites all in Him. The little maid-of-all-work was a flighty little person; she had not given satisfaction in her work, she was continually being reprimanded. One day, after all the others had left, she begged to be allowed to say something to the lady at the head of the class. 'Say on, my child; I am listening.' Hesitatingly did the girl begin: 'I think that I have now found the Saviour, and that I now understand what you meant when you told us that He is not far removed from us, and is not up in the clouds, and just for us to hear about when we go to church. I think I now feel that He cares, and that He helps us in our everyday life.' A smile of satisfaction lighted up the countenance of the lady. 'I am content, my child; and let us thank God for this blessing. But, before praying together, I want to know what makes you feel so sure of our Blessed Saviour having entered into your heart and soul.' 'Well,' said the little maid, 'formerly I only used to brush and sweep around the mats and rugs and carpets. Now I lift them all up, and see that all is clean under them.' This little girl found our Lord as surely as that member of the Sanhedrin, Nicodemus, and found in Him a light to lighten her life, as do all who seek Him sincerely. One of us is called upon to dust a floor; another occupies herself in a higher region of work. No matter; each one has work to do, and the essential part about any work is, that it has to be done with all one's heart and with all one's might. It is this seeing that all is clean underneath which makes all the difference. This is

thoroughness, and honesty when we perform what we promise. To take Christ for our example, and to rule our hearts, does all this for us. Jesus told Nicodemus that an inward spiritual birth must accompany as a necessary condition entrance by baptism into His kingdom. The rite and the new birth are both necessary: 'Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God' (St. John iii. 5-9). 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.' As none can track the wind's course, so none can track the Spirit's: 'The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.' The Spirit of God is ever ready to come to us, mysteriously as the wind comes, or as the still small voice of the Lord which speaks to the soul the minute we are ready to listen to it.

The image of the wind was probably suggested by some sudden gust sweeping down the street. Then came deeper thoughts on His Own Person and work: 'And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life (R.V., 'may in him have eternal life'). For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life' (St. John iii. 13-17).

Nicodemus had not yet the courage of his opinions; had he spoken out for Christ, he might have been expelled from the Sanhedrin. Later we read in St. John vii. that the chief priests and Pharisees had sent to arrest our Lord, and that when the officers returned empty-handed, and were asked, 'Why have ye not brought him?' and answered, 'Never man spake like this man,' they drew on themselves the Pharisees' rebuke. Nicodemus, who was standing by, was moved to say a word against the injustice of condemning Jesus without hearing Him, and said: 'Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?' (verse 51). He was at once answered by the Pharisees, 'Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet' (*i.e.*, the Messiah comes not thence). After the Crucifixion, Nicodemus assisted Joseph of Arimathæa in embalming and burying the body of Christ. St. John xix. 39, 40: 'And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound

weight. Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.'

Soon after this conversation with Nicodemus, to whom its record is clearly due, our Lord set out for Galilee, through Samaria. The fourth chapter of St. John is most fascinating. If the readers happen to be girls or women, what must their feelings be when they enter into the full significance of this wonderful story? To see Jesus talking to a Samaritan woman at Sychar (it was held unbecoming for any man of light and learning so much as to speak with a woman) is to gaze on a picture which brings before us the vastness of the change His religion has made in the world. What a fortunate being she was thus to meet Jesus. Thoughts can never soar high enough, nor words suffice, to describe adequately all that happened. We see 'the woman coming to the ancient well and drawing water for her household. What an unexpected largess of good things was to come her way!

Jacob's Well, near the tomb of Jacob and Joseph, called so up to this present day, is one of the loveliest spots on earth. 'A picturesque ruin lies scattered about the well. Pink roses in profusion bloom in fresh and airy beauty, shedding fragrance around, as you wander up and down and gaze, and gaze, and never exhaust your sense of admiration. The country further afield which meets the eye is gorgeous. The name of the plain to-day is El Mukhna. Mounts Ebal and Gerizim, guardians of the plain, dominate the scene. We can imagine the woman of Samaria pointing her finger towards the latter's imposing rock-girt heights. In this neighbourhood rested the Ark, when rescued by the Levites from the Philistines. Eastern colouring lends enchantment to the whole scene, and we give ourselves up to the enraptured consciousness of the living fact that all we read of in our Bible is true for ever; for the old landmarks remain, speaking eloquently of all that has taken place.

The sky was brilliant with sunset splendours. Jesus had travelled all day and was resting His weary limbs. Our Evangelist, indeed, says that Jesus had left Judæa and departed again into Galilee, and 'He must needs go through Samaria' (St. John iv. verse 4). Is it not just as if our Blessed Lord had known that there was an ardent soul waiting for the magnetic touch of His inspired teaching; waiting for that spark to fall which would kindle into a flame of righteousness the soul of the hardened sinner, making her ever after a light to guide others; an influence for spreading the good news, the Gospel among men?

St. John iv. verse 5, says: 'Then cometh he to a city of Samaria,

which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. For His disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.'

Jesus led the simplest life. This ought to set some of us thinking. We ought to try to curb our desires; to reduce our wants; to simplify our mode of living, according to the pattern laid down for us by our Saviour.

The woman of Samaria was taken by surprise: she could not understand why Jesus should see fit to ask her to give Him drink. She said: 'How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans' (St. John iv. verse 9).

The Samaritans were originally Assyrian colonists. After Sargon had taken Samaria, he carried away the Ten Tribes to Assyria. Men were brought from Babylon as colonists to take their place, and established in the cities of Samaria. At a later date large numbers of Assyrian colonists were added. (Ezra iv. verses 1-10). These colonists were first called Samaritans in 2 Kings xvii. verse 20. They brought with them their national gods, and troubles having come upon them, as it was supposed owing to the vengeance of the gods of the land, one of the captive Jewish priests was sent to teach them 'how they should fear the Lord' (2 Kings xvii. verse 28). As a consequence they adopted the Jewish ritual and worshipped Jehovah, but did not give up their graven images. After the Captivity, the exclusiveness of the Jews stirred up a mutual enmity which found expression on every opportunity in open hostility, in which the Samaritans generally took the lead. Sometimes Galileans passed through Samaria, which was the shortest way for them to Jerusalem, and on one occasion the Samaritans killed some Galileans who were passing through, and the conflict which arose was referred to Rome for settlement. The feeling of the Jews towards the Samaritans in our Lord's time was shown by their use of the word Samaritan, as a term of contemptuous reproach. For instance, in St. John viii. verse 48, we read, 'Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hath a devil?' This was the reproach addressed to our Lord by his Jewish adversaries.

Here once more we have a lesson brought home to us by Christ. We see how far He is above party strife. For Him no barriers exist. He asked not then, nor does He ask now, are we Jews,

Samaritans, Gentiles, or Catholics Roman or Anglican, Eastern Church or Western Church, Congregationalists or Methodists, or any of the other various denominations. St. Paul expresses well the universal scope of the Church that is directed by the mind of Christ: 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus' (Galatians iii. verse 28). 'Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity' (Ephesians vi. verse 24).

Christ revealed one God, one holy, divine love, boundless, free from petty differences, one love which reaches to every soul, and when received is salvation. If we could all see our differences aright by turning to our one centre of unity, remembering that unity in Christ means unity in diversity, we all would be one as in Christ's prayer. Do not let us be hasty in judging a brother or a sister, lest we be judged ourselves; do not let us hurt them with cruel and useless criticisms. How do we know, or how can we tell, that our particular creed is better than—nay! possibly as good for them as their own? It is that in which Christians agree, not that in which they differ, that counts. It is the faithful following of Christ, the union with God through Him. It is obedience; it is humility that counts. All these we have to aim at. All these are summed up by the one word, Christian. Different people have different expressions for, and different ways, and different means of arriving at, salvation. All of us have one common goal. It is not for us to lay down a law for others. Let us look to our own responsibilities, and do our duty by God and by man. The sect or denomination (both to be taken in the broad sense of the word) with which we identify ourselves, or to which we belong, according to what we profess, is a matter of accident. This should not surprise us. Take a child. Its parents or guardians bring it up. When quite young the child is taught according to the faith professed by those in authority over it. While young we are given no choice at all. On account of being without experience, everything is arranged for us. Being inexperienced, this important matter, like others, is taken out of our hands. You can see what I mean. In after-life it is the exception rather than the rule to throw over the faith of our childhood. For the sake of order in society, just as we have a name, an address, and belong to a country and a nation, and have a given round of occupation and interest, so it is customary for us to identify ourselves with and profess, a certain faith. This is all clear. Let us be humble. Let us certainly carry out, or at least try to, every principle we have come to look

upon as right during our education. Let us try to live our own lives aright; there is enough for us to do, and we have certainly no time to look into other people's business.

And now we return from this digression to the woman of Samaria. The answer she received from Jesus when she addressed Him is found in St. John iv. verse 10: 'If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.'

Once more we see that it is one thing to ask and another thing to receive. We can only receive at Christ's hands, after having given up the wrong that is in us. Jesus saw into the heart of this woman, that her mind was working towards the desire for a better life. She had led a careless, sinful existence, and Jesus spoke to her about it. She answered Him, 'Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet' (verse 19). Jesus explained that neither on Mount Gerizim, nor yet at Jerusalem, is the one and only place where God is to be worshipped. 'But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him' (verse 23). This profound teaching goes on to say: 'God is a spirit (R.M., 'God is Spirit'): and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth' (verse 24).

This we all remember reading about in the very first chapter of this book. The woman of Samaria had been taught, and knew well, the Messianic expectation. She said to Jesus: 'I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he' (verses 25, 26). It is not difficult for us to believe that our Saviour left a lasting impression for good on this woman's heart.

St. John iv. verse 27: 'And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman (R.V., a woman): yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her? The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city,

and saith to the men, Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ? Then they went out of the city, and came unto him. In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat. But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of.' This surprised the disciples; they were only thinking of meat which they had fetched from the village. They immediately thought that Christ had been supplied with food by others. Jesus said, 'My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work' (verse 34), which means that the spiritual food of saving the Samaritan woman so fully satisfied our Lord that he no longer needed bodily food.

'Say not ye,' our Lord went on, 'there are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? (that is, it was now December, and the harvest would be in April) behold I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.' This means that the harvest of the Samaritan fields was months distant; but that the harvest of Samaritan souls was already ripe for the reaper.

We hear that many of the Samaritans believed on Him, and that they asked Him to tarry among them. He complied with their request, and remained with them for two days. Thus it was that our Lord deemed it best to carry on His work; for Jesus Himself testified that 'a prophet hath no honour in his own country' (verse 44). Here, amongst strangers, He was gaining ground. St. John's Gospel tells us that from Samaria the Lord returned once more to Cana in Galilee. His teaching was making converts among the Samaritans, but mistrust and suspicion and antipathy were also on the increase among the Jews, who wanted an earthly leader against the Romans, not a spiritual Messiah.

At Cana there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum; 'when he heard that Jesus was come out of Judæa into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death' (verse 47). Somewhat reproachfully, our Lord alluded to the signs and wonders required, without which people would not believe. The nobleman was so full of his own trouble that he could think only of his son at the point of death, and that before him stood the Wonderful Healer who could save his child. The nobleman implored Christ to come down before death stepped in.

'Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way' (verse 50).

We see that there was not one moment's doubt in the mind of

the nobleman; that absolute faith enabled him to take Christ's word as true.

'And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth. Then inquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house' (verses 51-53).

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE GOSPELS (JESUS AND THE PROBLEM OF THE SABBATH DAY—
THE PREACHING AT NAZARETH—AT JERUSALEM—THE RETURN
TO GALILEE—MIRACLES OF HEALING AT CAPERNAUM—THE CALL
OF ST. MATTHEW).

ONE of the Evangelists, St. Luke, tells us, 'there went virtue out of him and healed them all.' When we allow ourselves time to dwell on this expression, it comes home to us what a beautiful one it is. Virtue here means healing power: the divine power resident in Christ went out of Him to all who had need. Viewed in the deepest sense, Christ's Goodness, His Love, His Mercy, are all still flowing from Him into us, if we are ready to receive them, for our lasting good. We see how He was able to deal with all kinds of disease, and indeed He never fails for a moment in removing any ailment, physical, moral, or spiritual. He heals and blesses and saves now as then unfailingly. He never attempted a miracle, and was forced to desist. Even when about to raise the dead, He was able to thank God beforehand for the mighty work He knew He was about to do.

Talking of Christ's work, we are brought face to face with the fact that Christ did not restrict Himself to six days of the week. We find Him at work healing and curing all who came to Him in the right spirit, even when it was on the Sabbath Day. The Gospels record this fact unmistakably. This is therefore specially intended for our understanding and guidance in life. In the Bible the Sabbath is the seventh day, and means the day of rest. It was probably known to the Babylonians, and it is possible that the Hebrew and Babylonian institutions came from a common source. Be that as it may, the Hebrew institution was free from the superstition associated with the Babylonian observance. The Sabbath was the seventh day of the week, so would fall on the day which is our Saturday. In all codes of the Pentateuch, the Sabbath is ordained, and its object is to provide a day of rest from field labour for an agricultural community distinctly for a humanitarian purpose. Exodus xxiii. verse 12: 'Six days thou shalt do thy work, and on the seventh day thou shalt rest: that thine ox and thine ass

may rest, and the son of thy handmaid, and the stranger may be refreshed.' In Exodus xx. verse 8, the command is to keep the Sabbath holy. 'It is the Sabbath unto Jehovah'; that is, to be observed in honour of Jehovah; and the cessation of work was to extend not only to the Israelites, not only to the strangers settled in the land, but also to the domestic animals. In Deuteronomy v. verse 14, the philanthropic purpose is insisted upon.

At first all worked well, the people enjoyed the rest offered them on the Sabbath, according to what had been taught them. But as time went on the restrictions and penalties became more severe. Quite natural and most innocent things came to be considered wrong, and by the time that Christ's ministry began, the Jewish legalists had made the Sabbath a caricature of what it was meant to be. The Sabbath had come to be a heavy burden on the people, and no more a refreshment. It was against the narrow and heartless literalism of such a conception our Saviour directed His wise teaching.

After our Lord's ministry on earth, in the first period of the Christian Church, the Judaizing Christians kept the Sabbath severely, while St. Paul, as the Apostle to the Gentiles, boldly spoke out for Christian Liberty and condemned the rigid keeping of the seventh day as though it were an essential of Christianity. The early records of the Christian Church show that the Lord's Day was revered and considered holy. It was well known as the Lord's Day when St. John wrote the Book of the Revelation (chapter i. verse 10): 'I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day.' Up to the fifth century there was considered to be no connection between the Sabbath and the Lord's Day. Christians assembled on the first day of the week, in memory of the Lord's Resurrection on that day, whence the day derived its name.

So much by way of explanation of the Jewish Sabbath and the Christian Sunday. Now we come to the passages in our four Evangelists concerning our Lord's dealings with, and the Pharisees' conception of, the Sabbath. We will do this without observing the sequence of other events in our Lord's life. The attitude of our Lord towards the Sabbath was that of an authoritative Reformer. He used what was good in the institution, while condemning the evil which had been engrafted upon it. He joined in the worship and the teaching in the synagogue. He taught that 'the sabbath was made for man and not man for the sabbath.' (St. Mark ii. verse 27). But against the exaggerated prohibitions of the Jewish legalists of anything in the nature of labour, He set His face like a flint.

St. Matthew xii. verses 1-3: 'At that time Jesus went on the sab-

bath day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat. But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day. But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him?

We see the extravagant casuistry of the Pharisees. What can the harm be of plucking off a few ears of corn? The Pharisees' position was that plucking the ears of corn was practically reaping, and rubbing the ears of corn was practically threshing, and both accordingly were breaches of the law against labour. Jesus answered that David, without offence, 'entered into the house of God, and did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests' (verse 4).

God did not condemn David for this act. Jesus goes on to explain that we are to avoid taking what we read in a restricted literal sense; He ends up by saying: 'For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day' (verse 8).

We go on to another incident in our Lord's life. We see Him about to heal a man that had his hand withered. Immediately those who were ready to find fault with Him attacked Him, asking: 'Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days?' (verse 10). Among the multitude of beautiful lessons taught and comforting words spoken by our Saviour, the words spoken and the lesson taught on this occasion are not, we think, least beautiful. Gentle pity overflowed from the large and tender heart of our Blessed Lord. Those gracious words sanctioned and confirmed the duty which the Jews recognised of treating animals with kindness and consideration even on the Sabbath day. Then He said to those standing around Him: 'What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days' (verses 11, 12).

Christ's teaching is very simple and, at the same time, profound. Christ's teaching as to the Sabbath greatly offended the Jews. It was the head and front of His offences against their arid legalism. We read that 'he knew their thoughts' (Luke vi. verse 8), and met them by healing the man. Thereupon 'they were filled with madness; and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus' (Luke vi. verse 11).

Another Sabbath-day teaching centres round the following incident, described in Luke xiv. verse 1: 'And it came to pass, as he

went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees, to eat bread on the sabbath day, that they watched him.'

All the Jews, even those Pharisee extremists, were in the habit of eating and drinking, and feasting on the sabbath. Jesus accepted one of the chief Pharisees' invitation. This was because it gave him an opportunity of mixing with people who required to be reached by personal intercourse, and thus to have their eyes opened to their own state and their own needs. St. Luke goes on to say: 'And, behold, there was a certain man before him which had the dropsy.'

It was Jesus this time who addressed the lawyers and the Pharisees in order to draw out from them their opinion. The question He put was this: 'Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day?' We find that this question put by Jesus worked a complete change in the attitude and behaviour of the assembled guests. They were at a loss for an answer. The Gospel says that 'they held their peace.' St. Luke xiv. verses 4-6: 'And he took him, and healed him, and let him go; and answered them, saying, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day? And they could not answer him again to these things.'

Here is a picture for us to look at. We see Christ sitting amongst the motley crowd; and a stout man standing between the two pillars, who was perhaps the poor afflicted man cured by Christ, only too glad to have his trying malady removed, regardless of what day of the week it might be. On the other side there is a man pointing his finger. Perhaps this is one of the haughty ones who finds fault with the practice of Sabbath healing, and takes upon himself to condemn the beneficent work of Jesus, when He restored to health the sick and suffering. We may still learn spiritual lessons from Christ's blessed teaching of the lawfulness of Sabbath-day healing.

Jesus had been now for some time making his headquarters at Capernaum, from which he had been visiting the country parts, preaching the Gospel, teaching in all the synagogues, and healing the sick. A very striking event in His ministry has now to be recorded. He came to his own town, Nazareth, which He had abandoned for the more busy centre of Capernaum, and now revisited for the first time. It was only a few months since He had left Nazareth; but how much had occurred in that time. In Galilee, as well as at Jerusalem, He had already made Himself known. On the Sabbath He went into the synagogue at Nazareth. He went into the synagogue, as His custom had been, to join in the common

worship. Whether Jesus was invited by the ruler of the synagogue to conduct the whole service, as was usual, or whether He was only invited to read the second lesson and preach, we are not told. They had two lessons in these services, one from the Law and another from the Prophets. Probably, if not already invited, Jesus stood up as a sign that He wished to read the second lesson. The Roll of the Prophets was given to Him. The Lessons were read in Hebrew and translated by an interpreter into Aramaic.

St. Luke iv. verse 16: ' . . . as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.'

After He had read the lesson, Jesus rolled up the book, gave it back to the minister (R.V., attendant) and sat down. When the people in the synagogue saw Him sit down, they knew that He was going to preach. They had, no doubt, heard of His mighty works at Cana and Capernaum, for we read, 'the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.' In a Jewish synagogue, the preacher sat down to deliver his sermon.

St. Luke iv. verses 21, 22: 'And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?' The sermon was in Aramaic.

We can see that His townsfolk were jealous of Him. What right had Jesus, the carpenter's son, to identify himself with the Righteous Servant in the lesson read from Isaiah? Jesus heard their criticisms, and changed the direction of His address, pointing out that both Elijah and Elisha had left the unbelieving Israelites and brought God's blessing to Gentiles, like the widow of Zarephath and Naaman the Syrian. The result was immediate: St. Luke iv. verses 28-30: 'And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. But he passing through the midst of them, went his way.'

After being cast out of Nazareth, Jesus returned to Capernaum, which now became more distinctively His home. At that lakeside

town He would, on the Sabbath, preach in the synagogue which the centurion had built—'For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue' (St. Luke vii. verse 5)—and of which the chief ruler was Jairus.

The next move with which we are acquainted is the visit to Jerusalem for the feast generally called the 'Unknown feast,' called by St. John simply 'a feast of the Jews.'

In the valley of the brook Kidron, which emerges from under the rock at the base of the Temple, and into which brook all the blood of the sacrificed animals was wont to run, there was a sheep-market (R.V., gate). This was one of the twelve gateways of the great wall which encircled Jerusalem. Through this particular gate referred to all the animals for the sacrifices were driven on their way to the Temple. Another historical feature of the surroundings was a pool of water known to us as the Pool of Bethesda. It was fed by a subterranean and intermittent spring. In olden days, to guard against a fierce sun, the pool was covered over. Under the awning, the sick and the poor, the halt and the maimed, used to lie and sit about. This was their retreat, and might be regarded almost as their hospital. But no doctor was there who could treat them. What they came for and believed in was the healing property of the water. To get into it, they thought was to be cured. The bubbling of the water was caused, according to the words of the Gospel, in this way: ' . . . an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had' (St. John v. verse 4).

One memorable day Jesus was walking amongst the sufferers. His kind eyes looked round, and on this particular occasion fixed their gaze on one man from among the many. The Gospel says (verse 5): 'And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years.' What a lifetime of helplessness these words convey. Words Jesus addressed to him later imply that in former days he had not been a man of good life. The Scripture tells us that Jesus said to him: 'Wilt thou be made whole?' (verse 6). Jesus selected the man who most needed healing, and also selected the man who most needed reformation. Here was a surprise. Here was a man who could not believe his own ears. Hopelessly he answered: 'Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me' (verse 7). This poor cripple could not move; his legs would not support him. Unsuccessfully he had shuffled along as best he could, but he was always too slow and always arrived too

late. Our Lord thereupon spoke the words of power: 'Rise, take up thy bed, and walk' (verse 8). This was said to the man who had not been able to move for thirty-eight years. Then we read (verse 9): 'And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath.'

Before proceeding, just let us put in one word about the bed, which the man was ordered to carry at the command of Christ. We must not think of a bed with a framework of wood or iron, which would be too cumbersome to be taken up and walked away with. In the East it was the custom to lie on a thin mattress, or even a mat, and to cover yourself with your cloak; the climate there is so dry, and often it is so hot, that the poorer people lie out and sleep under the canopy of heaven. It is therefore quite easy to pick up a few wraps and carry them away, and it is quite easy for us to understand this part of the story. But where the marvel comes in is the actual cure of this hopelessly paralysed man.

After Jesus had spoken His words of power to the paralytic, He immediately took Himself away from among the crowd. He wished for no demonstration. He worked quietly and unassumingly, taking no credit to Himself, but saying that it was due to His Heavenly Father that He wrought His mighty works. What a number of lessons we learn from Christ. There is not one single position in life which is outside the teaching and example of our Blessed Lord. He has had experience of all our conditions, and can supply all our needs. Through Him we can be blessed in every enterprise of ours. We have only to mould our actions according to His pattern.

When the Jews saw the cured man walking, and carrying away his bed, they grumbled, because this carrying of the bed was a breach of the Sabbath day. They accused the man. Gratitude overflowed his heart, now strong and well. Little did he care what the Jews were concerning themselves about. He brushed them aside, and said: 'He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed and walk. Then asked they him, What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed and walk? And he that was healed wist not who it was: for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in that place.'

The cured man met in the Temple his benefactor, who addressed the following warning to him: 'Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee' (verse 14). Thus we see this man cured at once of sickness and of sin by the power of God dwelling in Jesus of Nazareth.

When the Jews knew that it was Jesus who had healed the paralytic, they were infuriated. 'Therefore the Jews sought the more

to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God' (St. John v. verse 18).

And now we can safely draw our own conclusions from Christ's teaching regarding the Sabbath. We have to read Holy Scripture for our enlightenment and guidance through life, and to be a joy to us in all. The Old Testament teaching is widened and enlarged on in the New Testament. Once and for all, we find settled by the example of Christ the vexed question of how rightly to spend the Christian Sunday, which has taken the place of the Jewish Sabbath. How often do we in these latter days hear a discussion as to what is considered wrong and what is considered right to do on this special day.

The Jews rightly concluded that Christ identified Himself with God: 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise' (verse 19). The Jews deliberately accused Christ of blasphemy, and blasphemy was the greatest offence of all. Henceforth this charge was never allowed to be lost sight of. It was on this charge that the final accusation was made, and it was on this that Christ was really condemned to death at the last.

Besides this revolutionary Sabbath teaching, our Lord uttered many sayings which offended the Jews.

The Fifth Chapter of St. John is all-sufficient to convince anybody, at least any one who comes in the simple spirit of a child, and is ready to receive the good news, of the absolute certainty of Christ's oneness with God. We need this teaching as much as ever to-day. Besides impressing us with His own authority, He calls to witness John the Baptist. Jesus says: 'There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true. Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth. But I receive not testimony from man; but these things I say that ye might be saved' (St. John v. verse 32). This same chapter goes on to say, in verse 35, 'He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light. But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me. And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not. Search (R.V., 'ye search') the scriptures; for in

them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me that ye might have life.'

Jesus realised that no present good could be gained by his teaching to the stiff-necked and stubborn Jews. He decided to go back to Galilee, where His early ministry had been carried on. There He would soon draw again to Himself all His old friends and followers.

The next important event we have to record took place after our Lord's return to Galilee. We cannot do better than read the story as it is told to us in St. Luke's Gospel, v., verses 1-11: 'And it came to pass that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret, and saw two ships standing by the lake; but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship. Now, when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon, answering, said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing; nevertheless, at thy word I will let down the net. And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken. And so was also James and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth they shall catch men. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.'

These fisherman already knew Jesus; but this was their first call to leave their homes and give up their business, to be with Him continually. From this time a visible Church was in existence, the edifice of which the foundation had been laid when the two disciples left John the Baptist and followed Jesus; the same Church to which we Christians all belong now by direct spiritual descent.

In our Lord's time the synagogue at Capernaum was probably a sumptuous building, visited alike by rich and by poor. According to recent research and excavation, opinion inclines to think that experts can definitely decide upon the exact site where stood the

synagogue. To-day it is a ruin on the lake shore, where ground overgrown with brushwood and marshy ground alternate. In the year 1905, when I was visiting the small huts huddled together, which go by the name of Tol-huns, I came across excavators at work, who were bringing to light fragments and pieces of columns, and remains of architecture, which told of past splendours, even in the dilapidated condition in which they were. Kindly nature had thrown a mantle of green verdure over the crumbling stone and marble, forsaken for centuries, and had hidden from view the eloquent, although silent, records of bygone ages. The Lord's words were at once remembered. St. Matthew xi. verses 23-25: 'And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee. At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.'

And here it was also that one pictured the magnificent synagogue in all its splendour, as it was in the time when our Lord preached to the assembled crowds, and when we read of that piercing cry which went up, uttered in despair by the poor distracted maniac. This creature burst upon the Saviour, and asked and implored that he too might be saved. Christ had a power of mysterious mastery over souls possessed by evil spirits. At first the poor devil-possessed sufferer thus addresses the Saviour (St. Luke iv. verses 34, 35): 'Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not.'

Then we can imagine the maniac restored to sanity looking up into that Divine face of perfect pity, marvellously expressive of sympathy and help, and offering grateful thanksgiving for his deliverance.

From the synagogue Jesus went to Peter's house, where 'Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell him of her. And he came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them' (St. Mark i. verses 30, 31).

There was something very wonderful about our blessed Lord's healing. He did not allow golden opportunities to be wasted. He

restored to those who were ill and useless, health and activity. Thus the sick woman was able immediately to take up once more her accustomed place in her family circle, and make herself useful in home-life.

St. Mark i. verse 32 onwards says: 'And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. And all the city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him.'

Can we not imagine how ready all the sick and sore and crippled people were to flock around this never-erring and ever-ready Curer? Are we not, ourselves eager to drink in the healing waters of the soul-refreshing teaching of this Minister of God's Holy Word, who ever dwells on our Father's love, illustrating it thus by His own gentle handling of all afflicted creatures brought unto Him? The same chapter of St. Mark, verse 35, goes on to say: 'And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.' 'Solitary place' (R.V. 'desert place') properly means a waste of wild untilled ground outside the town.

There was great excitement in Capernaum. They were all eager to find this wonderful Prophet and Healer. Peter and others came to Him, and told Him, 'All men seek for thee. And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth. And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils' (St. Mark i. verses 37-39).

The next sufferer to appeal to the Great Healer was a leper. Leprosy is about the saddest of all the sad illnesses human flesh is heir to. It existed in the days of the Old Testament, and was the same disease cured by our Saviour, and still exists incurable to-day. At Jerusalem there is now a Leprosy Hospital. But in spite of this, numbers of poor lepers lie and crouch about certain streets, usually against a high wall by the roadside, begging of passers-by. Most of them are unable to move, some manage to crawl up to you, holding out diseased limbs, and showing pitiful faces, such as serve to send a shudder of horror through your whole body. What lives they have to live! Shunned and loathed by everybody and unable to help themselves. Most of them carry a small tin can, in which they rattle a solitary coin to attract your attention, thus asking for alms. Walking up to the Garden of Gethsemane, kept at the present time by an Italian Brotherhood,

who reverently tend the garden, you see crowds of these poor maimed specimens of humanity, who raise a lamentable moan, and beseech you to give them something. How one's heart aches for them: one can think of but one thing that could benefit them. Oh, for the healing touch of Christ. How they must daily yearn for Him to come by that way and help them in their distress, as only He is able to do, for the best medical skill is still powerless in the face of this incurable disease.

We turn to St. Mark i. verse 40, where the record says: 'And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.'

This poor creature full well knew that nothing was loathsome to our Saviour; that ever uppermost in Him was the will to help others.

'And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean' (verse 41).

Is it not too lovely to think of this? To dwell on the poor leper's faith and its great reward. To see Jesus showing such Divine compassion, and not shrinking from the touch of this most loathsome disease. The Hand of Sympathy and Love wrought the cure. The Son of God has but to say, 'I will.' That suffices.

The story goes on to say how Christ asked the man not to spread abroad the news. But doubtless the man was too happy and jubilant; he could not possibly keep this marvellous cure to himself. He gave it out, and everybody flocked the more round the Person of our Lord. It would have been better if the leper had considered his great Benefactor's commands. The result of his disobedience was that Jesus was so thronged by the people that He 'could no more enter openly into the city, but was without in desert places; and they came to him from every quarter' (verse 45). Let us remember that our Lord touched the leper. If the word of power was sufficient, why did He touch him? Evidently to convey the sense of His tender sympathy. The leper had probably for years been shut off from the touch of man. Christ restored him by His touch to his lost fellowship with mankind.

The next mighty work we read of is the healing of the sick of the palsy, which took place at a house in Capernaum; probably the house of Peter, to which Jesus had just returned from the missionary journey in the course of which he had healed the leper.

St. Luke v. verse 18: 'And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before him. And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they

went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling, with his couch into the midst before Jesus. And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee. And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone? But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answering said unto them, What reason ye in your hearts? Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (he said unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house. And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, 'We have seen strange things to day.'

The scene is not difficult to realise. The eager crowd was filling the house, and overflowing into the street while Jesus preached to them. Suddenly there arrived four men carrying a completely paralysed friend. Finding it was impossible to get in by the door, they ascended the outside staircase of the house to the flat roof, which they dug through, and let down their friend on his pallet bed through the hole into the midst of the house in front of Jesus. The strong faith thus displayed pleased our Lord, and the first words He spoke to the sufferer were (St. Matthew ix. verse 2): 'Son, be of good cheer: thy sins be forgiven thee.' He deliberately gave the paralysed man first the greater gift, the forgiveness of his sins, which our Lord's unerring eye at once perceived to be needed, before He gave the lesser gift to bodily healing for which the man was there.

The Scribes and Pharisees who were present at once perceived that this forgiveness of sins implied the giver's Divinity, and in their hearts accused Him of blasphemy. He read their thoughts, and answered them by asking: '. . . whether is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise and walk?' (St. Matthew ix. verse 5). Of course the actual forgiveness of sins was more difficult; but it was an easy thing to say, because success could not be tested. Accordingly our Lord said the easier thing, which however could be tested. He told the man to arise, take up his bed, and walk. The natural inference was that if the command, which could be tested, was miraculously obeyed, the other statement, which could not be tested, really issued in the spiritual miracle it asserted.

Next after the calling of the four fishermen came the call of

Matthew (Levi), the custom-house officer. Our Lord passed by and saw Matthew sitting at the receipt of custom, and said: 'Follow me.' He arose and left all, and followed Him. Matthew was evidently at heart already won by the teaching and personality of Jesus, which he must have had opportunities of knowing in the synagogue where Jesus preached. But he would be deterred from even the hope of becoming a disciple by the abhorrence with which his business was regarded. As little could he hope that the Great Prophet would take any notice of such a pariah as himself. Suddenly Jesus came by, and fixed on him eyes of sympathy and love that thrilled his heart. Then came the wonderful invitation: 'Follow me.' Matthew answered not a word. In speechless joy he rose, and left all and followed Him. Thus Christ gained a faithful follower, and the Church an Apostle and Evangelist.

The call of Matthew, who gave up his business to be with Christ, was followed by a feast given by him to his fellow-publicans. Jesus came to this feast. This gave great offence to the Pharisees, who could not conceive that any one with the slightest pretension to being a prophet could eat and drink with the despised taxgatherers. It shocked these strict religionists, who considered themselves to be the only good people, that Jesus should associate not only with taxgatherers, but with other outcasts, to whom, in contrast with themselves, they gave the name of sinners.

St. Mark ii. verse 17: 'When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.'

Here we may say a word about some other objections which the Scribes and Pharisees, and those who followed their guidance, advanced against Jesus. The chief objection we have already discussed at length: the teaching and practice of Jesus as to the Sabbath. Also the disciples of Jesus did not fast regularly as a duty, as John's disciples had done; and they did not keep the endless and ceaseless Jewish rules as to ceremonial washings.

The calling of Matthew added a fifth to the body of the Christian Church. Later, after very solemn preparation on His own part, Jesus called the Twelve. He evidently regarded it as a most important step in carrying out His mission. He spent the night before in solitary prayer, on the mountain behind Capernaum, and at dawn called up His disciples, and out of their number chose the twelve Apostles, that they might be with Him and that He might send them forth to preach. We do not give the names of the twelve Apostles here, as we have already done so.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE GOSPELS (THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT—THE RAISING OF THE WIDOW'S SON AT NAIN—THE FORGIVENESS OF THE WOMAN WHO WAS A SINNER—THE WOMAN WITH THE ISSUE OF BLOOD—THE RAISING OF JAIRUS' DAUGHTER).

BEFORE approaching such a great and serious subject as that unrivalled example of Christ's teaching, known as the Sermon on the Mount, we will make a few preliminary remarks. Is it not very strange that there are many people who read a great deal, but who think that a short quarter of an hour a day is enough for the study of the Bible? Do we not also know that a large number of people do not read the Bible at all, and that a smaller, but increasing, number have ceased to attend any place of worship? Yet most of these people regard themselves as Christians!

We possess in our Bible, and here to-day in particular, in the wonderful Sermon on the Mount, a never-failing fountain-head to supply the most elevated ideals of human life for all sorts and conditions of men. To call ourselves Christians, and to persuade ourselves that we have a right to the name, and yet to neglect to make ourselves acquainted with the teaching as well as the example of Christ, is surely contrary to common sense. We would not act thus in any other part of life. Let us glance round us and realise for how many things we qualify by training, both as regards our professions, our pastimes, our sports, our hobbies, our work, and our play. Then let us ask ourselves the question how much time of the twenty-four hours of the day and night we devote to the cultivation of our souls, or rather how little time we niggardly mete out to them? Why is it that often our religion occupies but a back place? To God we surely owe the most and the best of our time, and, indeed, the whole of ourselves. When the day of reckoning comes we shall certainly be obliged to answer for this.

Here in the soft spring morning on the peaceful Galilean mountain height was God giving His laws again, incarnate now in the person of a man; no longer terrible, but attractive, drawing all men to Himself, ruling by the motive of love, and not by the power of fear. The old laws of Sinai were for the childhood of the chosen race, and took the simple form of prohibitions. The new laws of

the Galilean mount were for a people who had sufficiently advanced in knowledge to be able to receive higher ideals and teaching. The membership of this Kingdom was for all mankind, and all the laws take the form of blessings. When we read these new laws we find they are not commands, but descriptions of character necessary for the members of the Kingdom. It is necessary that the whole character, and not a part of it, should be aimed at; the whole of the blessings belong to each member of the Kingdom, if they will exert themselves to take them. Our Lord began the Sermon on the Mount by enumerating these laws of the Kingdom.

St. Matthew v. verses 3-12: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

'Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

'Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

'Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

'Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

'Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

'Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

'Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

'Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

'Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.'

Blessed means happy, and the law of the kingdom in each place is seen to be the secret of happiness in this life as well as in the next. This blessedness our Lord offers by means of union with Himself, for it is a blessedness which He had already won and knew by experience in His own life, which He offers here to others. Indeed, the whole sermon may be regarded as a revelation of the character of God in Christ, that character which is really the earthly life of Jesus faithfully put into words.

It was a spring morning on one of the mountains north of Capernaum, and Jesus, who had spent the night in prayer, came down from the mountain top to found on earth the kingdom of God. A great crowd was waiting for Him. St. Luke's Gospel, chapter vi., introduces the Sermon on the Mount by a full account of the scene and circumstances. The crowd occupied a level plateau, and consisted of a great multitude of His disciples, and a great number of people not only from Judea and Jerusalem, but also from the

sea-coast of Tyre and Sidon, eager to be delivered from their diseases, eager to experience the healing power of His touch. The great Healer was for the time being to occupy Himself as the great Teacher—a healer still, but a healer of souls.

After He had chosen His chief officers for the Kingdom from the multitude of His disciples He called up those for whom there was room on the mountain height, and gave them the laws of the Kingdom, which we call the Sermon on the Mount. These are called the Beatitudes or Blessings. The first one may need a word of explanation. To be 'poor in spirit' means to feel oneself in need of help from God. Those will feel the need most who are trying most to be good; that is, God-like. They feel their own spiritual poverty in the presence of His infinite wealth.

The second Beatitude is for those that mourn. Again, as in the first, with which it is closely connected, the meaning has to do with spiritual things. Every one who sees the difference between what he is and what he ought to be, ought to mourn for it. That is a mourning which shall be comforted, for it will help us to grow like what we ought to be. Such mourning leads to mending.

The third Beatitude is for the meek. The meaning of this follows out our explanations already given. Meekness means here the opposite of self-assertion, and follows from the spirit commended in Beatitudes one and two.

The remaining five Beatitudes speak for themselves, and complete the ideal of the character of a citizen of the Kingdom.

In the next verse (13) our Lord goes on to say to His followers: 'Ye are the salt of the earth'; the meaning of that is that real Christians are the preservative that keeps from rotteness the whole body of the community. If they do not have such influence, they are worthless. 'Ye are the light of the world' (verse 14). In these words a similar duty to the community is enjoined. Our Lord went on to say that He had come to fulfil the Old Law and the Prophets—not to destroy them. Christianity is the fulfilment of the truth latent in Judaism. All that the Old Testament pointed to, is to be accomplished in Christ and is chronicled in the New. His followers are not to be satisfied with the literal teaching of the Old Testament, but are to go beyond it. The spiritual meaning of each of the Commandments is to be reached and obeyed. And now we have several great commandments of Christ, which illustrate His method of interpreting the Old Testament. Instead of looking merely to the outside acts of man, He told His disciples that the root of the evil lay in the thoughts and desires. It was there that guilt was really incurred, and there the battle against evil

had to be won. He boldly put forward His own Command as the final authority, superior even to the Law of Moses. Nothing could be more decisive and calmly self-confident than this: 'Ye have heard that it was said by (to, R.V.) them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: but I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. . . .' (verses 21, 22). ('Without a cause' should be omitted, as in R.V.)

Again, He deals with the Commandment against adultery in the same way: also with the divorce permitted by Moses, He deals with unhesitating directness. And other examples are given in the course of our Lord's teaching, of which we will quote the following, which sets before us the highest and hardest of practical ideals, that love of enemies which is the difficult scaling of the heaven-kissing summits of the heavenly, the Christlike life:

St. Matthew v. verses 43-45: 'Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.'

The sixth chapter begins with our Lord's warning against making a show before men, in three practical parts of the religious life: (1) Almsgiving; (2) Prayer; (3) Fasting. To make a show is to be a hypocrite or actor, as the word signifies.

Now we come to the centre of the laws of the Kingdom—the Law of Prayer. Not only are our Lord's disciples not to make a show of prayer, but also they are not to think that they will be heard on account of the length of their prayers. And then our Lord went on to give an authoritative model of prayer for their guidance. We call this the Lord's Prayer. St. Matthew vi. verses 9-13; 'Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: (For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.)' The doxology is a later addition. The prayer ends at evil.

The searching nature of this prayer is brought out by considering the request for God's forgiveness, which is made dependent on our forgiveness of others. If we use the prayer and forgive others;

we are forgiven. But if we use the prayer and do not forgive others, we are not forgiven and we practically pray that we may not be forgiven. Three points strike us specially in this prayer. What stands first in order and importance is God, and God's blessed purposes for all. Secondly, the user of the prayer and his wants, spiritual and physical, come last. Thirdly, we pray not each of us for himself, but each of us for ourselves and the rest of the Christian community. We said the prayer was a searching one: and we will find it so, and not solely in the petition which we gave as an example. Unless we are really trying to follow Christ in earnest, can we use any of the petitions? Real prayer will stop us from sinning, or else sinning will stop us from praying. It is a spiritual impossibility to go on in deliberate sin and, at the same time, to go on in earnest prayer.

Jesus goes on to unfold the inward life that must belong to every member of the Kingdom. We are not to lay up for ourselves on the earth treasures which pass away, but treasures in heaven. We are not to try the impossible task of serving two masters at once: we must choose between God and Mammon. Therefore He says we are to take no thought for our life, nor for the morrow; that is, we are not to be anxious about either. Christ bids us to behold the birds of the air: they are content to be looked after by God. Surely, then, God will look after us, because we are told that we are worth more than they. This does not mean that we are to sit still and do nothing, leaving God to do our work. God has given us powers to use, and moreover, intends them to be used. What He tells us here amounts to this: Use the powers which I provide; do your best, and leave the results to me. Remember that the birds are by no means examples of idleness or thoughtlessness. They look ahead and build their nests and prepare for their families: they go afield and seek for food, and provide for the little ones in their nests. God rewards their efforts. The birds neither sow nor reap, but 'your heavenly Father feedeth them' (St. Matthew vi. verse 27).

Our attention is drawn next to the lilies of the field, a simple and beautiful teaching which needs no comment. St. Matthew vi. verses 28-30: 'And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?'

Then he tells us not to judge others, and gives us an illustra-

tion of the mote and the beam. But He returns to what the soldiers of the Kingdom need most of all in order to do their duty—the power of prayer by which the aid of God can always be obtained by His children.

St. Matthew vii. verses 7-11: 'Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that asked him.'

Again, we are told to enter in by the narrow gate that leadeth unto life, and is missed by so many who take the broad way that leadeth to destruction. Christ says in St. Matthew vii. verses 24-27: 'Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.'

St. Matthew ends up his account of the Sermon on the Mount with these words: 'And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes' (St. Matthew vii. verses 28, 29).

In St. Matthew viii. verse 5 and following verses we read a charming story. St. Luke has the same in chapter vii. verses 1-10.

Among the many beautiful stories contained in the New Testament, the one about the Centurion deserves a high place. A centurion was a Roman officer who had command of fifty to one hundred soldiers, and these went by the name of a century. A centurion filled a place of trust and he had to obey the orders of his superior officer, while he had himself to be obeyed by those under his command.

We read in St. Matthew viii. verses 5, 6: 'And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.' The centurion had evidently culti-

vated a feeling of pity and solicitude on behalf of the poor sufferer, the slave under his care. When at a loss what to do for his sick slave, the marvellous cures wrought by Christ came to his mind. Surely this wonderful Prophet might help him in his trouble, and be able to cure his slave. We picture him approaching Jesus, clad in his Roman armour, helmet on head, sandals on feet, breastplate on breast. Bowing before Christ, he asked for help from One who is ever ready to help. At once the Healer complies with his request: 'I will come and heal him. The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed' (St. Matthew viii. verses 7, 8). The man knew that it was not at all necessary for Christ to take so much trouble on his account. He felt that it would be far too great an honour to expect the great Prophet of Nazareth to go to his house. The centurion went on to explain: 'For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it' (verse 9). If a centurion had only to give an order to those that were under him, how much more was this the case when the command came from the great Miracle-worker and Prophet of Nazareth. He needed only to say the word: the centurion believed that the word of Jesus would insure the cure of this slave whom he was so fond of. His argument appealed to Jesus, and the faith it showed pleased Him much.

'When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel' (verse 10).

While praising the centurion, this comment of our Lord cast blame on those who ought to have known better and believed more implicitly in Christ's teaching. Unbounded faith was here demonstrated by an alien, and Christ held up the centurion as a bright example to the Jews.

'And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth (verses 11, 12).

The meaning of our Lord's words is that many would come from heathen lands, and with Abraham's faith share Abraham's place in the Kingdom of Heaven; while the children of the Kingdom, the unbelieving Jews, would be cast out; and the contrast between actual membership in the Kingdom and self-banishment from it is

called outer darkness. This, and the gnashing of teeth, is Jewish language used by the Jews of the Gentiles, but here applied to Jews.

'And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the self-same hour' (verse 13).

Among the miracles which Christ wrought the most important were the three raisings from the dead, of which one was performed on the son of a widow at Nain. This word means beauty, and certainly this village does not belie its name. It is situated on the south-western slopes of the range of Mount Hermon, and overlooks the Plain of Esdraelon; Mount Tabor lies to the left of it, while you see Mount Carmel on the right. This is when you descend into the plain coming from Nazareth, and looking towards Nain. Not far off lie the little towns of Jezreel and Jennin. This Plain of Esdraelon is the battle-ground of the Israelite history, where each feature of the land speaks eloquently of events recorded in the Bible. At sunset one evening Jesus, in one of His Journeys, arrived at this very Nain.

St. Luke vii. verse 11-17: 'And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city named Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people. Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And he came and touched the bier; and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother. And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people. And this rumour of him went forth throughout all Judæa, and throughout all the region round about.'

We can picture to ourselves the dusty, white-looking mountain road, and the funeral procession leaving the gateway of the village. We can see the flat-roofed and occasionally high-domed houses, relieved by a silvery green olive tree, or dark funereal cypress; these latter shooting up like closed umbrellas. The friends would be accompanying the stricken mother, and all would be weeping and wailing piteously and plaintively. Christ met this funeral party, and went up to the open bier with the dead man upon it. Then Christ touched the bier and the bearers halted at the touch. He spoke the word of power, Arise; and the dead man sat up and began to speak. Then the Lord, who had wrought this great mira-

cle out of pure pity for the mother's sorrow, delivered the man He had raised from the dead to that happy mother's care.

At the present day, outside the city walls, rocks are still to be seen, and in them sepulchral caves. Can we at all imagine the joy with which this great miracle was received by the mother? No one can explain how this mysterious exercise of superhuman power was carried out.

St. Luke vii. verse 36, we read: 'And one of the Pharisees desired that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat.' We can imagine all the pomp and luxury and splendour with which this rich Pharisee was surrounded. In the centre of the courtyard would be the refreshing water in a handsome marble basin; the pavement would be of lovely coloured tiles or mosaic; on the walls would be luxuriant creepers. Cushioned couches with rich Eastern embroideries would offer accommodation to the visitors, who would recline on these, leaning on one elbow in Eastern fashion. Into these surroundings our Lord would walk in His simple dignity. Presently we would see a woman enter, poor, sad, forlorn, one who was not a bidden guest, but a person quite out of keeping with such select society. Perhaps she had been standing outside for a while, hesitating as to whether to enter or not. Of course in the East of that day the doors were left open, so that any one could enter who wished. It required a great deal of determination on her part to approach the One Person whom her heart was yearning for. A propitious moment would give her a chance of slipping in unobserved, and without receiving rude reprimands on the part of the servants who would be occupied looking after their master's guests. Then she would find herself in the presence of Jesus. St. Luke tells graphically the story of this woman: 'And, behold a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him, weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment' (St. Luke vii. verses 37, 38).

There was this woman just sobbing her heart out. She had followed Jesus about, and seen people leave His Presence freed, not only from aches and pains, but from the pangs of a hopeless slavery to sin. She herself had known only too well what the load of sin meant. She longed to be a better woman: her sins burnt within her like fire. Never could she forget them day or night: she longed to be washed clean. She wondered whether

there could possibly be a healing from sin for her. At first she shrank from obtruding herself; then she summoned up courage. Oh! to be made white, and to gain forgiveness. But in the town everybody knew her bad character; she had been notorious in the place. No, she had been too bad a woman; she felt it was to expect too much, that there should be a chance for her. Yet she approached unseen, and standing behind at His feet weeping, she washed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair, and kissed His feet and anointed them with her precious ointment. Jesus did not rebuke or repulse her; nay, He seemed to encourage a hope of pardon by His gentle silence.

'Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner' (verse 39).

How could Jesus, if He were really a Prophet and a Holy Man, have any care for or anything to do with a sinful woman? The Pharisee argued that the One whom he had bidden to his feast could not possibly be a prophet at all. How mistaken was the Pharisee's idea of holiness. Jesus of course read the Pharisee's thoughts. For the purpose of teaching the Pharisee, Jesus asked him a question.

St. Luke vii. verses 40-43: ' . . . Simon, I have something to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.' Directly Jesus had brought home the lesson to Simon, and had given him a great deal to think about, and had made him see the case in its true light, He turned to the woman, and addressing Simon, said to him: 'Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet. . . .' (verse 44). This was a discourteous omission on the part of the Pharisee. The very first thing that everybody was offered in the East was water wherewith to wash off the dust of recent travel from the sandalled or naked feet. What the reason of this inhospitable act was on the part of the rich Jew we do not know. Probably he did not think much of a prophet unmistakably poor in this world's goods, though he was willing enough to patronise him. Jesus pointed out the lack of hospitality: even the sinful woman knew better. Jesus says of her that

'she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint; but this woman anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little' (verses 44-47).

So we see that this poor sinner was fully forgiven, that her load was taken from her. Love, the great cleansing power, filled her soul, and 'he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God' (1 John iv. verse 16). Christ had received her into His Grace. 'And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven' (verse 48). The proof of her forgiveness was the fact that she loved. Think of her gratitude! And think of her blessed state henceforth.

'And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also?' (verse 49). The assembled guests marvelled at all that had taken place, and must have been deeply impressed by all they had seen and heard. The parting words of Jesus to the woman were: 'Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace' (verse 50).

We ought to meditate often on Christ's forgiveness of sins, and feel assured that His forgiveness will be extended to each one of us, provided that we approach Him with penitence and in faith and love.

In the following chapter (Luke viii. verses 1-3) we hear about other women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities. Of one called Mary Magdalene, out of whom Jesus had cast seven devils. Of another called Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who we are told 'ministered unto him of their substance' (verse 3). Christ passed on and visited many cities and villages, 'preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him' (verse 1).

St. Matthew viii. verses 23-27, St. Mark iv. verses 35-41, St. Luke viii. verses 22-25. We must be sure and read these passages for ourselves in the Bible. By night as by day the Lake of Galilee showed itself to me when I was there in its perfect beauty. Green slopes gently inclined towards the water, leaving just a yellow margin, a narrow strip of shore like the frame round a mirror. The water now looks sapphire blue, now emerald green, according to the sun and cloud effects. A wild profusion of flowers, luxurious in colour and varied in shape, lends interest and charm to the scene. We remember that Jesus dwelt here, and

drank in all nature's beauties, which His Father had so lovingly provided in this land which was now His home. On the mountains all around our Lord had prayed; on the lake he had sailed, and on the shore He had taught. The tumble-down castle of the ancient town of Tiberias lay on my left hand as I sat in front of my tent and tried to receive an indelible impression into my mind from the solemn associations of those hallowed surroundings. The marks of past splendour have well-nigh disappeared; not so the marks of God's handiwork. The distinguishing features of the land remain unchanged, and will forever charm and inspire every one who is privileged to dwell here for a time. Further down the lake, beyond Tiberias, built in our Lord's lifetime, there were pointed out to me the sites of Bethsaida, Capernaum, Magdala, and many other historical places. As you sail to the extreme end of the lake, you see the Jordan passing into it, lazily and almost imperceptibly, and very muddily, as though it were weary with its journey through hot and dusty lands; very different it is from the boyish mirth and fantastic frolic of young Jordan, whose acquaintance you make when you reach the northern point of the ancient land of Palestine near Cæsarea Philippi. We have just spoken of the lake in its calm aspect, but we well know that a land-locked lake as well as the open ocean can change its mood. We also know that calm and peace can forsake our own heart and soul. Thus it would appear we are all subject to the same influences as God's nature, of which nature we are part. Angry billows and violent storms can assail us, when we put out upon the open waters of life. On the memorable occasion we are thinking about at this moment, we see the Lord Jesus in a boat on the lake with His disciples.

St. Luke viii. verses 22-25: ' . . . and he said unto them, Let us go over unto the other side of the lake. And they launched forth. But as they sailed he fell asleep: and there came down a storm of wind on the lake; and they were filled with water, and were in jeopardy. And they came to him, and awoke him, saying, Master, master, we perish. Then he arose, and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water: and they ceased, and there was a calm. And he said unto them, Where is your faith? And they, being afraid, wondered, saying one to another, What manner of man is this! For he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him.'

We see one of these sudden movements of natural forces which caused great fear to the companions of Jesus. In contrast to this, we note the perfect calmness of our Saviour reflected in His

words. We see His superhuman power to save under any circumstances. And this power is not exercised in a spasmodic manner; His help is steady, sure, and absolutely trustworthy.

Jesus arrived on the opposite bank of the lake, where the mountains are wild and rugged. (The country belonged to the Gerasenes, or rather, to give the correct spelling, Gerasenes. The place where they landed was called Gerasa. At once, before it was even possible for our Lord to have recovered from the fatigues and effects of the storm-tossed passage across the lake, a hideous sight met his eyes. This was a poor man possessed by devils, who lived like a hunted animal away from the homes of men, among the cave tombs. He was of such strength that he had broken his chains and torn off his clothing and wandered about naked, cutting himself with stones, crying day and night at the top of his voice. Our Saviour, notwithstanding His own exhausted condition, at once took pity on the maniac.

St. Mark v. verses 6-9: ‘. . . when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him, and cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not. For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit. And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many.’

Jesus then delivered the man from his madness by casting out the evil spirit. ‘And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid’ (verse 15). How our Lord cast out the evil spirit, out of this or any man, is beyond our power to explain; but of the fact that He performed this and other miracles of the same kind, we have ample evidence in the widespread reputation He acquired for such marvellous cures. The man thus delivered prayed that he might continue with Jesus, but no doubt for his own good that he might have to depend upon himself, he was sent away by the Saviour with the words, ‘Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee’ (verse 19).

Jesus and His disciples returned to the opposite side of the lake once more. No sooner did He arrive at Capernaum than His time and attention were claimed by Jairus, who met Him, saying that his little daughter lay at the point of death. In his agony he appealed to Jesus, knowing the multitude of cures He had performed. Our Lord did not hesitate, but followed the father to his house through a thronging crowd. Suddenly Jesus felt that

somebody was touching Him. St. Matthew ix. verse 20, St. Mark v. verse 25, and St. Luke viii. verse 43, tell us this pathetic incident. The touch was that of a poor woman afflicted for twelve long years with a grievous malady, an issue of blood. She went to the fountain-head of healing, to this great and good Prophet of Nazareth. Hoping to escape observation, she timidly touched the hem of His garment, and immediately she was made whole.

St. Mark v. verses 30-32: 'And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes? And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing.'

The woman came trembling and fell down before Him, and told Him all the truth. St. Matthew ix. verse 22: 'Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole.' He had healed the woman, and her faith had made her able to receive His healing.

St. Mark v. verses 35-42: 'While he yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further? As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe. And he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John, the brother of James. And he cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly. And when He was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? The damsel is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn. But when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying. And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise. And straightway the damsel arose and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment.'

This account is far more detailed and vivid than that in St. Matthew or St. Luke, and one naturally asks from whom was it obtained? Obviously from one of the three who accompanied our Lord to Jairus' house and saw the miracle performed. The well-supported tradition that this Gospel contains the memoirs of St. Peter shows us from whom. Readers of this miracle have sometimes found a difficulty in the statement that our Lord turned out

those who were bewailing the damsel. The explanation is that they were hired mourners; their grief was fictitious, and their scornful unbelief made them quite unsuitable persons to be present at the miracle.

Hardly had Jesus departed thence when He was followed by two blind men, who kept crying after Him: 'Thou son of David, have mercy on us' (St. Matthew ix. verse 27). Jesus asked them: 'Believe ye that I am able to do this?' They said unto him, Yea, Lord. Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you. And their eyes were opened' (St. Matthew ix. verses 28-30).

Many were the aching hearts, and many the weary souls that found help, and hope, and sustenance, and strength at this time. Care was wiped away; cures were effected. A light was kindled never to be extinguished. Seed was sown for the full harvest of God's Kingdom on earth. And during all this great period of Christ's teaching, one idea was never lost sight of by Him: and that was the Kingdom of God, a life of self-denying love and willing service which constitutes that Kingdom on earth. This Kingdom is the Kingdom of God, but our Lord Himself is the direct ruler, as the accredited representative of the Father in Heaven. Righteousness, a pure life, good done to others; these are what He continually insists upon as being essential. He was in the midst of the people, daily seen by everybody, living His own life as a proof how the perfect life could be lived, and was to be lived by those who accepted Him as Lord. He was there to show us that God rules the universe by invisible but immutable laws, within us as well as without us, which have been ever since the world began, and remain unchangingly true for all eternity. Only by obedience to those laws can any of His human creatures arrive at lasting satisfaction and ultimate and final good, which is to be identified with the will of God.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE GOSPELS (THE SENDING FORTH OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES—THE FEEDING OF THE FIVE THOUSAND—MIRACLES ON THE LAKE—WALKING ON THE WATER—THE JOURNEY THROUGH PHENICIA—THE CONFESSION OF PETER, THE ROCK-FOUNDATION OF THE CHURCH—THE TRANSFIGURATION).

THUS far we have been occupying ourselves with some of the events which took place in the middle period of Christ's Ministry: but we must leave much untouched and untold, which should be sought out by earnest, persistent and methodical reading of the Gospels.

Now we have come to the sending forth of the Apostles to teach and to spread the Good News. St. Matthew x. verse 1, St. Mark vi. verses 7-13, and St. Luke ix. verses 1-6, have passages on this subject. In details they vary; substantially they agree. It is always best for us to turn to the actual words of the Gospels. In St. Matthew x. verse 1 we read: 'And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.' These twelve Apostles were commanded at present not to go into Gentile cities. These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel' (St. Matthew x. verses 5, 6). Our Lord's own mission was in the same way first to the Jews, and only after the Jews to the Gentiles.

'And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give' (verses 7, 8).

This means that Christ freely gives us power to do what He bids us do, and also that whatever advantage and whatever blessing we possess we are called upon as a duty to share freely with others.

Christ's charge to the Twelve went on: 'Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses. Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat. And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence. And when ye come into an house, salute it. And if the

house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city' (St. Matthew x. verses 9-15).

We, like the Apostles, are to be Christ's messengers, and take His word to all people, and we must expect the difficulties which our Lord foresaw in giving the Good News of the Kingdom to others. The chief way in which this message must be conveyed by all of us is by the witness-bearing of consistent Christian lives.

Jesus went on to say to His Apostles: 'Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves' (verse 16).

His messengers must be prepared to be firm and wise, while gentle in all their dealings. He predicted that His disciples would have to suffer persecutions and troubles of all kinds: He advised them to be meek and patient under them. If their Lord had to suffer, they must expect to suffer. 'The disciple is not above his master. . . . It is enough that he be as his master' (verses 24, 25).

St. Matthew x. verses 21, 22: 'And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.'

This definite prediction of our Lord was literally fulfilled, first in the persecutions carried on by the Jews against the infant Church, and afterwards in the persecutions on a much larger scale by the Roman Emperors, who set before them deliberately the extirpation of the Christian religion. He told them that in these trials they must simply trust to God.

'Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows. Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven' (St. Matthew x. verses 29-33).

In the same chapter of St. Matthew we read in verses 34-38: 'Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and

the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.'

The coming of the Prince of Peace must bring conflict—the conflict of good against evil, of light against darkness. As long as the reign of evil and darkness is left to continue unchallenged over mankind, this conflict does not arise; but as soon as the true King comes, the false king, the prince of Evil, will fight for his sovereignty, and the long struggle begins which will continue till the victory of Christ is assured. That conflict began with the coming of Christ, and is going on to-day in the twentieth century, though in different forms to those of the first century. The Captain of our Salvation, who led and leads the army of light, Himself first bore the brunt of the battle, and, by the sacrifice of Himself, conquered. It is by the sacrifice of themselves that His soldiers must conquer also. Our Father in Heaven sympathises tenderly with all His struggling children, for even the death of a sparrow concerns the All-Father's Heart, the Heart which loves and sustains all that He has created.

This beautiful chapter closes with the touching words of Christ: ' . . . whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.'

We see that not the smallest acts of kindness ever goes unnoticed by our Lord. Loving acts form the Christ-like character, and that character so formed is to be our exceeding great reward.

During this period of our Lord's ministry a great miracle was performed at Bethsaida Julias—the feeding of the five thousand. (All four Gospels have accounts of this—St. Matthew xiv. verses 13-21, St. Mark vi. verses 32-44, St. Luke ix. verses 11-17, St. John vi. verses 5-15.) St. John gives by far the most vivid and interesting details.

St. John i. verses 1, 2: 'After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias. And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased.'

Jesus went by boat to Bethsaida, and the people, knowing where He was going, followed Him by land round the head of the lake. Probably the greatness of the multitude was caused by the fact that the Passover was at hand, and people had already arrived at the lake-side towns on their way to it. It was not till their coming

that our Lord, who had been teaching them, noticed the need of the multitude, who were far from home and had nothing to eat. Jesus 'saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?' (verse 5). It is added in the Gospel that 'this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little' (verses 6, 7).

'Pennyworth' of bread means rather sevenpence worth, the denarius being a small silver coin of about that value; that is to say, six or seven pounds' worth of bread would have been required to supply even a scanty meal. Christ had already fed the multitude with spiritual food, the Bread from Heaven.

'Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?' (verses 8, 9). The details that the loaves were barley loaves, which was the poorest and cheapest kind of bread, and that the fishes were small, we owe to St. John. This was the provision for our Lord and His disciples probably till the next day. Here we see the extreme poverty in which our Lord lived. They had money in the common purse to give to the poor, because they denied themselves and lived on the commonest food. This was not asceticism, but self-denial for the sake of others. The words 'small fishes' is one word in the original, and means a savoury eaten with bread, what we would call a sort of dried sardine from the lake.

Here St. Mark's account is the most detailed and vivid; St. Mark vi. verses 39-42: 'And he commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass. And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties. And when he had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all. And they did all eat, and were filled.'

The word 'ranks' means literally 'flower-beds,' the vivid memory of the Apostle Peter recalling the scene—the bright-coloured clothes of the crowd showing on the green grass like beds of many-coloured flowers. We gather from the account that the people sat on the lower slopes of the hillside, and from the fact that the grass was abundant and green, we perceive that it was in the springtime the miracle took place. It was evident that the disciples had by this time learned to believe implicitly in their Lord. They did not hesitate to arrange the people for a meal, when there was practically no food to give them. We may also note

that Jesus, as was His habit at meals, took the bread, and gave thanks, and brake it. The language used recalls the Holy Eucharist. We may add that probably the thanksgiving used by our Lord was the Jewish grace used when the food eaten was chiefly bread. Another grace was used when the food consisted of fish or meat. The words of the grace, whether given in Aramaic or Greek, were probably these: 'Blessed art Thou, Jehovah, One God, King of the World, Who causest to come forth bread from the earth.'

We must not forget a sequel of this miracle, which has a practical lesson for us.

St. John vi. 12, 13: 'When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves which remained over and above unto them that had eaten.'

Our Lord's example is always intended for our learning, and here we see Him teaching economy as a virtue that must be sought by all His followers, inasmuch as it is a part of the Master's own conduct and character. By implication this amounts to the condemnation of all waste.

The immediate effect of this miracle on the multitude was a great outburst of popular enthusiasm for the worker of the miracle. St. John vi. 14: 'Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.'

This was the kind of prophet the dullest of those sense-bound minds could appreciate; one who had made five loaves into food for five thousand; such a prophet as seemed to them the coming one, the Messiah, beyond a doubt. The embers of the Great Hope kept alive in the hearts of the people for centuries, burst forth into flame under the influence of a miracle which they had all seen with their eyes, and tasted the result of with their mouths. Here was the real Messiah. An immense enthusiasm moved them to make Him Israel's king. Knowing probably from past experience that He would not be willing to accept kingship, this great crowd of five thousand men resolved to seize Him and force Him to put Himself at their head.

St. John vi. 15: 'When Jesus perceived they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.'

Our Lord had come to establish a very different Kingdom to that which they desired. His Kingdom was to be a **society** of men and

women, a brotherhood closely united and moved one and all by His spirit breathed into them by Himself. Even His disciples, whom He had taught what this Kingdom meant, misunderstood Him, and hankered after the material Kingdom of the Messianic Expectation, in which they hoped themselves to occupy high places as friends and companions of the King. From this final refusal of our Lord to accept the earthly kingship which the people wished to force upon Him we may date the beginning of the decline of the great popularity which He had reached at this time. In this connection we may note that had our Lord consented, His success as an earthly conqueror would have been almost certain; for in the same part of the world, and with a similar but inferior Semitic race, Mahomet, some hundreds of years after, achieved a gigantic success. The splendid fighting of the Jews, especially of the Galileans against the trained legions of Rome, about forty years later, shows what material Jesus would have had at His command had He yielded to the temptation of putting Himself at the head of an enthusiastic people, and winning an earthly kingdom by the sword; but this would have lost the spiritual kingdom still growing to-day.

On Good Friday, in the year 1905, I was beside this lake. My tent was pitched on the sward quite near to the water, so that I could hear the lipping of the wavelets on the shore. The lake has its own unique charm, radiant with the recollection of the one perfect life. Through every change, whether of sunshine or of storm, the remembered presence is ever at hand. The Eastern twilight passed at a stride into the darkness, and the moon rose and sailed silently on its way, growing in brightness and intensity until the lake was sheeted in purest silver. The full moon's rays fell upon the quivering surface of the water. All was hushed; all was awe-inspiring. Nature, for this time at any rate, was in harmony with the soul of man. With love and reverence one's thoughts dwelt on the events in the life of our Lord associated with the scene.

The two next miracles were performed on this lake. We find them recorded in three Gospels: St. Matthew xiv. verses 22-36; St. Mark vi. verses 46-56; and St. John vi. verses 16-21. After the five thousand had been fed, St. Mark vi. verse 45 and following verses says: 'And straightway he constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while he sent away the people. And when he had sent them away he departed into a mountain to pray. And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land.'

St. John vi. verse 18 says: 'And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew.'

In St. Matthew xiv. verse 24 we read: 'But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.'

St. Mark vi. verse 48 says: 'And he saw them toiling in rowing.' St. John vi. verse 19: 'So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs.' St. Matthew xiv. verse 25: '. . . in the fourth watch (3 to 6 a.m.) of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit ('apparition,' R.V.); and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered him; and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me to come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?'

The failure which followed Peter's doubt reminds us of the immense power of faith. So long as Peter believed, he was able to obey his Lord and walk on the water as He did. Is not this certainly true, in the spiritual sphere, of all followers of Christ? The power of faith gives the power of obedience in the most difficult circumstances.

St. Matthew xiv. verses 32, 33: 'And when they (Christ and Peter) were come into the ship, the wind ceased. Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.'

Soon after this Jesus returned to Capernaum. And there the great crisis in popular opinion took place. The first turning in the tide of national enthusiasm for Jesus was after the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand, when He refused to yield to their efforts to take Him by force and make Him their earthly king. Apparently they thought that He refused the kingship out of fear of the consequences or doubt of His own capacity for the Messiahship, and disappointment and dissatisfaction at Christ's attitude soon grew into defection among his adherents. This was helped on by His great mystic discourse in the synagogue at Capernaum, when He put Himself forward as the Bread of Life to believers. Such passages as St. John vi. verse 51: 'I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world,' aroused questioning

and dissent in materialistic minds. 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' said they. To which Jesus answered (St. John vi. verses 53-56): 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.'

This teaching in the synagogue caused many of His disciples to murmur. St. John vi. verses 61-69: 'When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life. But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.'

Our Lord's reply shows that Peter spoke in the name of the Twelve, to whom our Lord's question had been put: 'Will ye also go away?' The reason for this question comes out in our Lord's words in John vi. 70: 'Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?' The disaffection had reached the Twelve. The only Judæan among them, the man of Kerioth, represented this feeling, and his mind was already moving in the direction which issued in the Betrayal. Apparently he acquiesced in Peter's fervent expression of the loyalty of the Twelve, but Jesus knew what was in the heart of each, and His words here foreshadow His plainer indication of the traitor at the Last Supper.

Our Lord was now to change His mode of life. Hitherto He had gone about openly among the people, preaching the Kingdom and healing the sick. From this time until the events of the last week of His life He sought retirement as much as possible, in order to have time to train the Twelve to carry on His work after His departure, without the ceaseless interruptions from Scribes and Pharisees sent down from Jerusalem to question and criticise Him,

as well as from the eager multitudes. These still desired an earthly Messiah, and as His teaching became fuller and deeper, and revealed that spiritual union with Him constituted membership in the Kingdom and salvation, they murmured and opposed him more and more.

Jesus now set out with the Twelve for a long journey, and this took a new direction. The little party travelled on foot towards the Mediterranean, through a region thickly filled with a heathen population. This district, 'the borders of Tyre and Sidon' as St. Mark calls it, lay north of Galilee, and spread from the Mediterranean to the Jordan. When Christ arrived here we read in St. Mark vii. verse 24, he 'entered an house, and would have no man know it: but he could not be hid.' The object of His journey was retirement. He 'withdrew' thither, says St. Matthew. The house where he first sought shelter was on the border between Galilee and the Tyre and Sidon district. The fame of Jesus, however, as a Worker of Miracles had spread even throughout this heathen region, and somehow the news that the Great Prophet was in this house had reached a heathen woman who was in great need of help.

St. Mark vii. verse 25: ' . . . a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet: the woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter. But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs. And she answered, and said unto him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs. And he said unto her, For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter. And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter lay upon the bed.'

Our Lord's unusual attitude towards this woman evidently sprang from the desire to draw out her latent faith to its full power, by the difficulty He interposed. But His words did not deter the woman, for she felt behind the words the sympathy and lovingkindness of the speaker. Her faith grew with the difficulty, and in humble but trustful speech she expressed it, and received the glad approval, and the gift for which she had come as a suppliant to Jesus.

His mercy to the Syrophenician woman and her daughter defeated His object of obtaining privacy and retirement in Phœnicia. St. Mark tells us (taking the correct reading of St. Mark vii. verse 31 as 'through Sidon') that after a circuit through the territory of

Sidon He made His way into Decapolis, probably through some of the foothills of the Hermon range. Decapolis was an essentially heathen country in the Tetrarchy of Philip. There the heathen people again besought the Great Healer for help.

St. Mark vii. verses 32-35: 'And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him. And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.'

Our Lord's use of the Aramæan language here suggests that there were others present who understood that language, because, of course, the deaf man could not hear. The words 'He sighed' perhaps require a little explanation. Why did our Lord sigh? Possibly because He could only restore this one sufferer out of the many sufferers in this region which He was immediately to leave, as He knew that the report of this miracle would bring the crowds upon Him once more.

Or more probably for this reason: the burden of the world's suffering as of the world's sin had to be borne and was borne by Him, and in a wondrous way by the power of His universal sympathy the words of the Prophet of old concerning the suffering Messiah in Him were fulfilled. St. Matthew viii. verse 17: 'That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.'

St. Mark vii. verses 36, 37: 'And he charged them that they should tell no man: but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it; and were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.'

Now we come to a crisis in our Lord's life and in the lives of His disciples. Jesus had gone with them northward to Cæsarea Philippi, which was a town built by Philip the Tetrarch in honour of Cæsar. The same place goes to-day by the name of Banias, formerly Paneas, which had for its derivation the name of Pan, a Greek god. History has much to tell of this place. It is distinguished by the beauty of its position; for nature has endowed it with a lavish hand. It is situated not very far from the foot of Mount Hermon. A striking feature there, on the face of one of the red-coloured mountains (the latter acting like a kind of natural background to the scenery which meets the eye) is to-day a

cave which was formerly a sanctuary of the god Pan. Here King Herod, on receiving the Tetrarchy, erected a temple to Cæsar Augustus, his benefactor. At a later date captive Jews were brought to Cæsarea Philippi, and were made to fight with wild beasts, as the custom was in the Coliseum at Rome. The place abounds with Roman architectural remains.

On Easter Sunday, 1905, I found myself here. We were encamped on a mountain slope rather high up, giving me a view of all the country round. Beneath in a gorge, in wildest mood, danced and foamed young Jordan through the rocks and boulders of its channel. In whatever direction I looked, all was clad in luxuriant green. The tents were pitched in a perfect grove of mulberry and olive and fig trees, affording most grateful shelter from the sun, which was shining down in all its Eastern strength. My tired animals, which had had a fatiguing morning's journey, starting at sunrise, revelled in the freedom from their loads, disporting themselves under tamarinth and olive trees on the green and grassy camping-ground with great enjoyment, which was a delight to see in a country where, alas! their poor creature wants are but scantily attended to. One longs for the coming of the Spirit of the Saviour, who held all His Father's creatures in such affectionate regard, and whose tender heart would bleed at seeing them ill-treated, and at finding how little His lessons have been taken to heart.

The crumbling remains of an archway, which gave me welcome as I passed under it, seemed very doubtful as to whether they would continue to rest upon the supporting stonework, or whether they would abruptly part company from it forthwith. A huge stone slab, which bore traces of a Roman inscription greatly effaced, was poised on two pillars, and one felt thankful when one had safely passed from under it. A fine ruin, full of historical associations, built on an eminence, still seems to guard this beauteous place. The birds were singing and chasing one another in the branches overhead, the air was astir with bees and beetles sucking nectar and ambrosia from the beautiful flowers growing in wild profusion all around. Brilliant butterflies were wafted across one's line of vision at intervals. Owing to their chrysalis birth, butterflies are sometimes regarded as emblems of immortality. The sight of them suggested the fancy that souls of the past were holding communion with us in the place where they once had lived and loved. No human voice was heard. As one lay stretched out on the sward, looking up into the blue vault of heaven, one was transported into a different world. Time seemed no longer to exist. Earth and

eternity seemed to be as one. I did not awake from my day-dream until some little native children, with intensely dark eyes, had approached, and were looking at me, perhaps with little less wonder than I at them. These little creatures had been driven by curiosity to see for themselves what interlopers had broken in upon their otherwise secluded existence, and brightened for a while the monotony of their every-day life. They were attractive little beings. By-and-by quite a number of little ones had collected. We could not reach one another by means of language, as I could not speak Arabic. A bond of sympathy drew us together, and before many minutes had passed, we were all playing and enjoying ourselves. These little Arab children were delighted with a game of oranges and lemons, laughing and dancing for joy just as English children do.

It was in this district, to which our Lord had withdrawn with the Twelve, that the definite foundation of the Christian Church was laid, and it may have been that the rock-wall at Cæsarea Philippi suggested to Christ the form of the reply in which He received Peter's confession. The castle built on the high rock-wall may have suggested the picture of the Church built on the rock. Jesus introduced the great question by asking His disciples (St. Mark viii. verse 27): 'Whom do men say that I am?' Our Lord's method was here, as always, not to tell His disciples directly, but to lead them to find out the truth for themselves.

St. Mark viii. verses 28-30: 'And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say Elias; and others, One of the prophets. And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ. And he charged them that they should tell no man of him.'

St. Matthew's account here is fuller than St. Mark's.

St. Matthew xvi. verses 16-19: 'And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.'

The Apostles had found out the truth for themselves, or rather, God had revealed it to their seeking; and Peter, as their spokesman, had declared it. On this true confession of Peter and the other Apostles, Christ was to build His Church, and as we know,

He did so build it. To Peter, and to the other Apostles, whom he represented, the Gospel was given to be, to those who received it, the key to open the way for them into the Kingdom of Heaven.

As to the meaning of the binding and loosing, we gain light from our Lord's words after His resurrection, when in the Upper Room He breathed on His disciples and said unto them: 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained' (St. John xx. verses 22, 23).

This power of remitting or retaining sins was given, not to the Apostles only, for in the Upper Room, in addition to the Apostles, there were other Christians with them. It was given to the whole Christian community, of which the Apostles were at that time the representatives or heads. Those who accept the Christian Revelation, accept it with remission of their sins, *i.e.*, deliverance from their power. Those who reject it, reject the remission of sins it brings, and so their sins are retained. Therefore those who bring the Christian Revelation to any one may be spoken of as remitting or retaining sins, according as it is accepted or rejected.

To return to Peter's confession. Though it leaped forth from the mouth of the Apostle in a moment, as Jordan leaps from the cave in the rock which gives it birth, the faith which found expression in the confession had grown long and gradually from Peter's and the other Apostles' continuous experience of their Lord.

Our Lord's question brought a critical time to the Apostles, and we have seen how faithfully they met it in the confession of Peter. A critical time also comes to each one of us. If it comes not sooner, it comes later. We are bound to be active and not passive, if we wish to lead the true Christian's life. It is given to each one of us either to reject or to accept Christ. This alone is really what life amounts to. One can manage to be a man or a woman committing no murder, not molesting a fellow-creature, and passing through life in a negatively decent manner. This is what animals do. A hen will take care of its chickens; even a wild beast will protect its young. Dogs at times can be more faithful than human beings. This we acknowledge. God has made them so. But do we not remember that we have dominion over all of these? 'Are ye not better than they?' (St. Matthew vi. verse 26). Do we not remember that more is expected of us because we are rays of the Eternal Light? It is not a case of being a superior sort of animal in God's creation: it is a case of being a Christian, a follower of Christ. Here we have the crucial point. In life it is the motive which counts with God.

Peter's confession expressed a fuller and deeper faith in their Lord's Divinity on the part of himself and the other Apostles than they had reached hitherto. They were in a position now to receive the trying and disturbing revelation of what awaited their Lord in the immediate future.

St. Matthew xvi. verses 21-25: 'From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

Evidently the Apostles still hankered after the old way they had expected the victory of the Messiah to come. They had still to be taught the difficult lesson that their Lord's victory must come through suffering and apparent failure and death. Their Lord also taught them the further lesson following out of this, that, as their Lord suffered and conquered, so they too must suffer and conquer in their turn. From this time forth our Lord went on with His teaching, which the Apostles evidently found most difficult to accept and assimilate. Yet one day the disciples were to follow their Lord's example in a life of suffering and service.

St. Matthew xx. verse 28: 'Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.'

Six days after Peter's confession came the great event of the Transfiguration. Not till they had fully perceived and confessed His Messiahship, and been made to understand the nature of the victory He was to win, were even the chosen three fitted for the experience of beholding Him in His glory.

St. Mark ix. verse 2-8: 'And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them. And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them. And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus. And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one

for Moses, and one for Elias. For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid. And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him. And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves.'

Peter, to whom this account in St. Mark's Gospel may be attributed, was one of the three eye-witnesses, and records this fact in his Second Epistle i. verses 16-18: 'For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.'

In this passage St. Peter describes the sight of the Transfiguration of Christ as the sight of His Majesty. This was a sacramental beginning of the Revelation of Christ as God. The Glory which shone from His Person and transfigured even His clothing was the glory of the Godhead made visible, and was intended to enlighten the minds of those who saw it. He shone forth on this occasion visibly to bodily eyes as God Who was manifested in the flesh in His daily life of self-sacrifice to spiritual eyes. The Transfiguration, then, may be described as the perfect Godhead shining through the perfect Manhood, and glorifying it.

The 'high mountain' on which the Transfiguration took place is evidently part of the Hermon range—either Mount Tabor, one of the spurs, or even Hermon itself. The Transfiguration may be regarded as a foreshadowing of the glory of the risen Christ after His resurrection. It was in the same Body that was transfigured on the Holy Mount that He afterwards appeared repeatedly in His Majesty to the same disciples who had seen Him there.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE GOSPELS (FROM GALILEE TO JERUSALEM—THE HOME AT BETHANY—THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES—FIRST TEACHING IN THE TEMPLE—THE MINISTRY IN PERÆA—THE FEAST OF THE DEDICATION AT JERUSALEM—RETURN TO PERÆA—VISIT TO BETHANY TO RAISE LAZARUS FROM THE DEAD—WITHDRAWAL TO EPHRAIM).

FOR the portion of our Lord's ministry which we are now about to consider, the chief authorities are St. John and St. Luke. St. John is occupied with our Lord's visits at Jerusalem. St. Luke supplies the record of what took place before, during, and after the journeys to Jerusalem. St. Luke's account gives the ministry in Peræa, the land beyond Jordan; St. John's, the ministry in Judæa. The six or seven months between the Feast of the Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles are briefly mentioned by St. John in the seventh chapter. This, of course, is because St. John did not purpose to deal with the Galilean ministry, sufficiently dealt with before in the other Gospels.

St. John vii. verses 1, 2: 'After these things Jesus walked in Galilee; for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him. Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand.'

The Feast of Tabernacles is described by Josephus as the holiest and greatest among the festivals of the Jews. It fell in October, and Christ's visit may be dated 28 A.D. The Feast of Tabernacles commemorated the first possession of Canaan. It also gave the people an opportunity of showing their gratitude to God for the harvest. The pilgrims from Galilee had to start some time beforehand, not only allowing time for the journey, but also for the preparations, which, especially for this feast, were considerable; booths having to be constructed in which to live during the festival, in memory of the nation's wanderings in the wilderness.

The road which Christ took from Galilee was the direct road through Samaria, whereas the Galilean pilgrims generally took the road through Peræa, in order to avoid the hated land of the Samaritans.

St. Luke ix. verses 51-56: 'And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face

to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when his disciples, James and John, saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.'

Here we have an incident which reveals to us the natural character of the sons of Zebedee, and why they were called 'the sons of thunder.' They may have been thinking of the appearance of Elijah in the Mount of Transfiguration, and they certainly did not realise the difference between the spirit of Elijah and the spirit of Christ. Our Lord's action and words condemn religious intolerance in the most unmistakable way. Instead of punishing the Samaritans for this refusal of hospitality, our Lord led His disciples into Jewish territory to another village. The refusal of the Samaritans of course was due to the fact that our Lord was going up to the feast at Jerusalem, the rival centre of worship. One of the incidents of this journey to Jerusalem is worth recording. A certain scribe came to Jesus and said: 'Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest' (St. Luke ix. verse 57). This shows a remarkable enthusiasm in one of the scribes, who, with the Pharisees, ranked among the bitterest opponents of Jesus. Devotion at this time counted for much, for most of our Lord's followers had withdrawn from Him, and He was going now towards an end which, by His own prediction, was to be suffering and death.

It seems to have been on this same journey that He called a man to follow Him—that is, to be His disciple—who asked to be allowed to go and bury his father, thereby practically renouncing the call. The burial, mourning, and the subsequent purification would have occupied many days. What our Lord wanted was prompt and absolute devotion; He discouraged all shallow and hasty adherence. He wished men to count the cost before they made the great decision. Another who wished to follow Christ asked leave to go first to bid farewell to those at home.

St. Luke ix. verse 62: 'And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.'

It is extremely difficult to arrange in chronological order the incidents of this journey, during which, according to St. Luke, the

question put by a certain lawyer, what he was to do to inherit eternal life, led to one of the greatest of our Lord's parables—namely, the one of the Good Samaritan.

St. Luke x. verses 25-37: 'And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right; this do, and thou shalt live. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour? And Jesus answering, said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.'

This ranks as one of the most beautiful of our Lord's parables; so simple that a child can understand it; so deep in its teachings that it remains unexhausted to-day, with a yet fuller message for men of the twentieth century than it had for men of the first. Our Lord draws a picture of a poor man stripped by thieves and left for dead: a poor wounded man lying forsaken at the roadside in a very lonely place. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho begins at once to descend, and continues to descend all the way. You feel as if falling into an abyss; the atmosphere becomes very trying and most oppressive, for Jericho is 1300 feet below the sea-level. It is lonely here in the extreme; bare rocks and mountain gorges alternate with far-stretching tracts of wild land, affording scant pasturage. An occasional shepherd with his speckled or black sheep is the only sight which relieves the monotony.

Journeying along with my mounted Arab escort to guard me from possible Bedouin attacks—which reminded me how little changed is Palestine to-day from what Palestine was at the time the parable was spoken—one had no difficulty in giving rein to the imagination. The whole scene stood before one as vividly as in real life. One saw the poor man abandoned to his fate, passed by by the selfish priest and by the Levite, who 'looked at him and passed by on the other side.' The inn on this mountain pass still goes by the name of 'The Good Samaritan.' A very cheery one-eyed host gives one a hearty welcome on arrival. Water is still fetched from the well that must have refreshed both man and beast in the time of our Lord.

The parable, in truth, contains many lessons for us. Firstly, we are taught the lesson that the mere fact of a man needing help constitutes his claim upon us. Our Lord's influence and example is the chief power to enable us to realise this ideal of duty to our neighbour. In the contrast between the conduct of the Samaritan and the conduct of the priest and the Levite, we are shown the contrast between real religion and unreal. It is not the religion of the priest and the Levite which is condemned, but its unreality; just as it is not the religion of the Samaritan that is praised, but its reality. Our Lord had no hesitation in putting the religion of the Jews as in itself above that of the Samaritans. The parable is intended to teach us the great truth that practical religion consists in one essential spirit of self-sacrificing love, issuing in devoted service to our fellow-men. But kindred to this, and enforcing it most powerfully, is an interpretation which sees in the wounded man left half dead by the wayside, humanity prostrated by sin and left unhelped by formal religion represented by the priest and Levite, but rescued at last by the loving service of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Slightly varied, the same interpretation applies with equal felicity when the wounded man is taken to the individual man or woman rescued from the death of sin and tended into the life of righteousness, which is Salvation, by Him who is 'able to save to the uttermost.'

Immediately after this parable we read in St. Luke that Jesus came to a certain village, and from St. John we know well the name. The village in which His journey to the Feast of Tabernacles ended was the village of Bethany, so close to Jerusalem as to be almost a suburb. In this village there was a house where Jesus was received as a guest by two sisters, Martha and Mary. They had probably intimated to the messengers whom Jesus had sent on before to make arrangements for the reception of Him-

self and His disciples, during their stay for the Feast of Tabernacles, that they would receive Jesus, but that His disciples must lodge elsewhere. The disciples seemingly went into Jerusalem for the festivities, while Jesus stayed at Bethany at Martha's house. During this first visit of our Lord to Bethany, Lazarus, the brother of the sisters, was evidently absent, doubtless in Jerusalem for the festival week.

The sorry remains of what was once beautiful Bethany are to be seen lying half-way up an incline in a sequestered spot, nearly two miles from Jerusalem. The very pathway between Jerusalem and Bethany which our blessed Saviour must frequently have trod can be followed by us to-day. Groups of olive trees, as well as fig and almond trees, still grow there, but the date palms are gone from which Bethany (house of dates) takes its name. The eyes of Jesus must have rested on much the same landscape we admire to-day. He, who took such deep pleasure in the natural world which our Heavenly Father has prepared and made so beautiful for our delight, must often have gained strength and solace in contemplation of the beauties of nature on His way.

Making every allowance for the difference there is in everything we see in Palestine to-day, one realises, when resting here awhile, that the same sun sets in the same place as of yore, and everything is holy because it is, and ever will be, associated with memories of our Lord.

The home of Bethany became Christ's other home on earth; for here He felt at ease, and here He was understood. The atmosphere of affection in this household was in harmony with His personality. He was with a family who appreciated and loved Him.

St. Luke gives us a beautiful account of the beginning of the friendship with the family of Bethany.

St. Luke, x. verses 38-42: 'Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman, named Martha, received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.'

In a very few words the Bible is able to give us a complete description of these two sisters, and the difference of their characters. Mary, quiet and intense, so devoted to the person of our

Lord, and so enraptured with His teaching that she could think of nothing else. Martha, equally anxious to honour the great Teacher, but not understanding Him as well as Mary, and thinking to please Him by giving all her energies to the preparation of an elaborate entertainment. Jesus would have preferred that the simplest food should have been provided, and that Martha should have done as Mary did, and listened to His teaching; but He recognised Martha's genuine affection, and the gentleness of His reproof appears evident in the repetition of her name.

The feast had been going on for some time before our Lord went into Jerusalem from Bethany.

St. John vii. 14-17: 'Now about the midst of the feast, Jesus went up into the temple, and taught. And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned? Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.'

He taught so boldly in the Temple that some of the Jews were deeply impressed. St. John vii. verses 25-31: 'Then said some of them of Jerusalem, Is not this he, whom they seek to kill? But, lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ? Howbeit we knew this man whence he is: but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is. Then cried Jesus in the temple as he taught, saying, Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am: and I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not. But I know him: for I am from him, and he hath sent me. Then they sought to take him: but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come. And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?'

Again (verses 37-39): 'In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)'

The result of this teaching was a division among the people; some inclining to accept Him as the Christ, others objecting that He was a Galilean. The officers who had been sent to arrest Him came back to the chief priests and Pharisees who had sent them,

half-convinced themselves, and giving the true reason for their failure: 'Never man spake like this man' (verse 46).

Early in the morning of the next day our Lord returned to the Temple. St. John viii. verses 2-11: 'And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down and taught them. And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, they say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.'

The great importance of this passage is that it records the only instance in which our Lord dealt with a sinful action. We gain from this account, and the way in which He dealt with the sin, some knowledge of the Divine Tribunal; a far more searching and yet a tenderer tribunal than that of man. The writing on the ground, probably in the dust of the Temple court, was no doubt a mere mechanical action of writing, and expressed absorption in His own thoughts and disregard of His questioners. After the sentence of Jesus, He left it to each of the accusers to condemn himself, and in that Holy Presence no one dared to assert his own innocence. The Scribes and Pharisees were forced to feel that abstinence from sinful acts did not involve sinlessness of thought and purity of heart. The woman was made to feel that even a flagrant sinner like herself might repent and hope for forgiveness.

A long discussion with our Lord's Jewish critics followed, in the course of which they accused Him of being a Samaritan, an accusation which reminds us of the Parable we have lately been considering. This discussion ends with a very important declaration: that of our Lord's Divinity.

St. John viii. verses 56-59: 'Your father Abraham rejoiced to see

my day: and he saw it, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am. Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.'

Here we have a foreshadowing of the supreme claim of our Lord, which brought about His condemnation and Crucifixion. The Jews correctly enough interpreted the words: 'Before Abraham was, I am,' to be intended as a claim on the part of one whom they looked upon as merely a man, to be God as well as man.

The ninth chapter of St. John tells of the restoration of sight to a man who had been blind since his birth. The mode by which He did this is worth recording. St. John ix. verses 6-14: ' . . . he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam (which is, by interpretation, Sent). He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing. The neighbours therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged? Some said, This is he: others said, He is like him: but he said, I am he. Therefore said they unto him, How were thine eyes opened? He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight. Then said they unto him, Where is he? He said, I know not. They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind. And it was the sabbath day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes.'

Why did Jesus use saliva and clay? The reason was that the day was the Sabbath, and it was expressly forbidden by the narrow Judaism of the Pharisees to apply saliva to the eyes on the Sabbath day. The kneading of the clay on the Sabbath day was equally forbidden. It is evident that Jesus deliberately went against the rigid traditional view of the Sabbath, and healed the man in this way in order to challenge the Pharisee position.

The little village which to-day still bears the name of Siloam exists, as it would appear, very little altered in condition from the time of our Saviour. Curious little apertures allow the air to enter into the houses, which are built of yellow sandstone, and are mostly two-storied and always flat-roofed. The place is built in terraces, and gives one the impression of having been built in parallel lines along the hillside across the valley of Hinnom and beyond the tomb of Absalom.

The blind man was brought up and cross-examined by the Council of the Pharisees as to his healing. He stoutly maintained that if this man were not of God, He could do nothing. Then they cast him out with contempt from their place of meeting.

St. John ix. verses 35-38: 'Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.'

Here we see that it was to this poor blind man who had been healed that our Lord revealed the conditions of membership in the new society which was to be distinct from Judaism. For the first time He offers Himself as the object of faith. He had before this, as we have seen, called men to be His followers. He had accepted their allegiance. Now for the first time He gave a test of fellowship: belief in Himself and belief which evidently issues in worship.

In the tenth chapter we come to a very beautiful allegory in our Lord's teaching. It is called Parable in our Authorised Version by a mistranslation of the original word, elsewhere translated Proverb.

St. John x. verses 1-5: 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.'

This allegory was addressed primarily to the Pharisees, who claimed to be shepherds of God's flock and fold, and yet were in utter blindness as to the Good Shepherd Himself. In the allegory Christ sets Himself forth under two figures: as regards the fold, He is the Door; as regards the flock, He is the Shepherd. Our Lord explains the allegory Himself, so there is no need for any explanation of ours.

St. John x. 7-16: 'Then said Jesus unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that **they** might have life, and that **they** might have it more abundantly. I am

the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not; seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.'

The last words of this passage contain a most deplorable mistranslation; the words are: 'and there shall be one fold and one shepherd.' The word *fold* means really *flock*, and the importance of the change is obvious.

At the end of the explanation of this allegory, which, we may observe, is a New Testament version of the twenty-third Psalm, our Lord predicted publicly and plainly His own Death and His own Resurrection. The immediate result of His teaching may be given in the words of St. John x. verses 19-21: 'There was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings. And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him? Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?'

Immediately after the Feast of Tabernacles Jesus retired into Peræa, where John the Baptist had preached, and where He Himself had been baptized. A great change had taken place since then. The leaders of the people, the Scribes and Pharises, were now bitterly opposed to Jesus, yet on the other hand there was a much fuller knowledge of Jesus, of His wondrous works, and of His preaching. Hitherto He had preached in Galilee and in Jerusalem; He now gave some months to a ministry in Peræa. The people there had not had time to forget the impressive call to repentance given by John the Baptist, so that in a very real sense they were prepared to hear and understand Christ. His Peræan ministry lasted about six months, and was divided into two parts—the first from after the Feast of Tabernacles, the end of September or beginning of October, to the month of December, when He came to Jerusalem to the Feast of Dedication; the second part from the close of the Feast of the Dedication to the beginning of April, with an interval for a short visit to Bethany to raise up Lazarus from the dead. The account of this ministry in Peræa is supplied chiefly by St. Luke, chapter xix., with the exception of a passage in the twelfth chapter of St. Matthew, and short references in St. Mark x. 1, St.

Matthew xix. 1, St. John x. 40. St. Luke's account contains but little narrative of events, consisting mainly of discourses and parables. Just as the beginning of the Galilean ministry had been marked by discourses and parables, so was the beginning of the Peræan. The first thing to notice in the Peræan ministry, according to St. Luke, is the account of our Lord casting out a devil, and the dispute which followed, evidently with the Pharisees, who accused Jesus for casting out devils by Beelzebub. This charge was met by our Lord by showing its unreasonableness in a short but convincing argument. Then we read, in St. Luke xi. verse 37, that a certain Pharisee asked Him to breakfast, and wondered that He had not first gone through the requisite ceremonial washing before eating. Thereupon our Lord delivered the last discourse directly addressed to the Pharisees recorded in St. Luke. This is another step in the attack on the Pharisees' position, which was developed during His Peræan ministry. The result of this attack we are told in St. Luke xi. verses 53, 54: 'And as he said these things unto them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things: laying wait for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him.'

After this a great multitude of people gathered to hear Him, and the crowd was so great that they trod one upon another. One of them asked Him to speak to his brother, and make him divide the inheritance.

St. Luke xii. verses 15-21: 'And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.'

This is the first of the series of the wonderful Parables which distinguish His Peræan ministry. The next event recorded by St. Luke took place on this wise. Our Lord was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath.

St. Luke xiii. 11-17: 'And, behold, there was a woman which had

a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself. And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her, Woman thou art loosed from thine infirmity. And he laid his hands on her: and immediately she was made straight and glorified God. And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day. The Lord then answered him, 'and said, Thou hypocrite! doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day? And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.'

In St. Luke we read, after a graphic characterisation of Herod as 'that fox,' a touching lament for Jerusalem.

St. Luke xiii. 31-34: 'The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee. And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to day and to morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected. Nevertheless, I must walk to day, and to morrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!'

About two months had passed since Jesus left Jerusalem for Peræa at the close of the Feast of the Tabernacles. It was December when Jesus arrived in Jerusalem for the Feast of the Dedication. This feast was not a Biblical institution. It had been instituted by Judas Maccabæus when the Temple, desecrated by Antiochus Epiphanes, was solemnly purified and dedicated again to the service of God by that devout patriot. The festival was also called the Lights. The illumination of the Temple and also the illumination of private houses were salient characteristics of this feast. Thus the illumination was universal, and a close connection was established between the custom and the religious life of the nation and the life of the family and the individual. Here is a lesson for us. As the Temple had to be kept purified and well lighted, so too the family life, as well as the individual life, requires care and attention. Our Lord's teaching shows that the outward life is intimately associated with the inner

life of man. The outward life is intended to be sacramental, an outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible grace.

In the Sermon on the Mount our Lord calls His followers 'the light of the world.' In St. John ix. verse 5, He calls Himself 'the Light of the world.' We can only be the light of the world if we receive light from Him, the central light: the Sun of the spiritual world. As the planets' light is borrowed, so is ours. The inward heat of pure love is the life-giving light of our Spiritual Sun.

We turn to St. John for an account of what took place at this feast.

St. John x. verses 22-24: 'And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch. Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? It thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.'

The answer of our Lord was a test of faith. Though He was the Christ of the Old Testament, He was by no means the Christ the Pharisees hoped for (verse 25): 'Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me.'

That is to say, even if they could not yet understand His teaching, His mighty works were there to interpret it. The miracles were full confirmation for the teaching. The Jews were answered finally by the great declaration of Christ's Oneness of Essence with God: 'I and my Father are one' (verse 30). 'One' is neuter, *i.e.*, one essence, not one person.

St. John x. verses 31, 32: 'Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?'

The pathetic irony of His answer was calculated to appeal to any lingering spark of justice in His hearers' hearts. Our Lord finished His address on this occasion by a final appeal. St. John x. verses 37, 38: 'If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him.'

Our Lord's words seem to have had some slight effect, for there was no further attempt to stone Him; but they tried to arrest Him, though, overawed by His personal majesty, they let Him go forth out of their hands.

After this escape from His enemies, our Lord left Jerusalem. St. John x. verse 40: 'And went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized; and there he abode.'

Here in Peræa the people seem to have been simpler-minded and warmer-hearted, and many of them believed on Him. Perhaps also the unforgotten attraction and influence of the Baptist's preaching contributed to this result. The time between this journey and the last entry into Jerusalem falls naturally into two parts, divided by the journey to Bethany to raise Lazarus from the dead. To the first of these two periods belong a number of Parables which it is impossible to arrange with certainty in chronological order; the same difficulty meets us in the arrangement of the discourses and events. These Peræan parables differ from the Galilean parables, which required explanation, in being easy to be understood by all our Lord's hearers. They bring the Good News, the Gospel, to the lost. The Divine compassion runs through them, and reaches its highest manifestation in the parables recorded in the fifteenth chapter of St. Luke.

To understand these parables we must understand the circumstances, and they are set forth in the first verses of this chapter.

St. Luke xv. verses 1, 2: 'Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.'

The Jews held that works of penitence were required before God would receive the penitent. But Christ taught that God had come in Him to seek and save those that were lost, not waiting for repentance and amendment on their part. The murmuring of the Pharisees and Scribes against our Lord's attitude towards sinners was the immediate cause of the parables, which show that Christ's attitude is exactly God's attitude. All these parables enforce this view. The work of the Father and the work of the Son is regarded as the same, and that work is the restoration of the lost. Christ has come to do the work, and the Father longs to welcome the wanderers home again. The first of these parables is the Parable of the Lost Sheep. This parable, like the next, the Lost Coin, is addressed directly to the Pharisees. 'What man of you having an hundred sheep,' says Christ, just as He had addressed the Pharisees in a recent discussion on the Sabbath, 'Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit' (St. Luke xiv. verse 5).

The last parable, that of the Prodigal Son, is not like the other two, a defence of our Lord's action, but a revelation of the reason of His action, that He was doing literally the work of His Father. The essence of the first two parables is the same, the seeking of the Saviour until He finds and rescues the lost, and the joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. The

parable of the Prodigal Son is the crown, not only of these three parables, but of our Lord's whole teaching by parables. It is the Gospel in the Gospel, as it has sometimes been called. It is so perfect in every detail, and as a whole, that although well known, we must quote the main portion of it here.

St. Luke xv. verse 11: ' . . . A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks (*i.e.*, carob-tree pods) that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.'

The meanings of this parable are manifold, but we can only indicate a few. God is our home: when we love God, we love home. The far country into which we go is forgetfulness of God, as St. Augustine interprets it. When the prodigal came to himself, he at once thought of his father. The prodigal, of course, represents mankind, and in every man there is a true self which, stifled though it may be by years of sin, still lives, and can be reached by the Saviour's appeal. To be a true Christian is to fully possess this true self, as the ruling part of one's being.

From the teaching of Christ at this period, we turn now to His works. We open St. John's Gospel, and read the whole of his beautiful account of the raising of Lazarus, which is the climax in the miracles of our Lord. It is not only the miracles of miracles,

as the Prodigal Son was the parable of parables, but, unlike the miracles in Galilee, it is very fully attested. It took place quite close to Jerusalem, and in the presence of numbers of spectators, many of them hostile to Christ and some of them converted by what they saw. It has been well said, if this miracle be true all are true; for to raise the four days' dead was an exercise of manifestly supernatural power. The great thinker, Spinoza, said, that if he could accept this miracle, he would humbly accept Christianity.

We start at chapter xi. verse 1, of St. John: 'Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.) Therefore his sisters sent unto him saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was. Then after that saith he to his disciples, Let us go into Judæa again. His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again? Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if any man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him. These things said he, and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well.'

What the disciples felt is what we are so thankful for when anybody is ill whom we love. After tossing about in feverish restlessness, we are so thankful when calm, beautiful sleep closes the weary eyelids of our patient, and brings him relief from aches and pains, and enables him to wake up refreshed.

But Jesus was not speaking of a common sleep. He was referring to the death of Lazarus. To the Christian, death is a sleep. Our word 'cemetery' means a sleeping-place. We sleep the death-sleep here to wake to a better life hereafter.

St. John xi. verse 14: 'Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead; and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him. Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow-disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him.'

It is plain that the disciples dreaded this journey which Jesus was about to take. To them it seemed a deliberate risk of the danger

of death, so bitter was the hostility of the Pharisees. It was just as if their Master was going straight into an enemies' camp.

St. John xi. verse 17: 'Then when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had lain in the grave for four days already. Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off: and many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him; but Mary sat still in the house. Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee. Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? She saith unto him, Yea, Lord; I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world. And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee. As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto him. Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met him. The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there. Then when Mary was come where Jesus was and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, and said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, Behold, how he loved him! And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died? Jesus therefore, again groaning in himself, cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days. Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God? Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always; but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe

that thou hast sent me. And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go. Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the thing which Jesus did, believed on him. But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done.'

A few words may be said on this marvellous account. It is evidently that of an eye-witness, full of vivid touches as well as of minute details. Turning to verse 25, Jesus says: 'I am the resurrection and the life.' That is, resurrection is not a doctrine, but a fact, being the personal communication of the Lord Himself to believers here and now. He that is in union with Christ has true life, in the present and in the future. The permanence of our humanity is to be found only in our union with Him.

Turning to verse 33, we read that Jesus 'groaned in the spirit and was troubled.' The meaning of this is first perhaps that Jesus felt an indignant emotion (which he expressed by a groaning) at the dread and horror of death by which those he loved were overcome. He regarded death as a peaceful sleep from which there was a sure and happy awakening. By His sympathy He felt what they felt, and sorrowed to perceive the needless terror of death, by which His friends and all mankind were oppressed. A fuller meaning must not be lost sight of: that in some mysterious way, in taking away the sufferings of men, He took them upon Himself. 'Groaned' may also be translated with R.M. 'was moved with indignation' at the power of death.

Turning to verses 41, 42, we find that our Lord thanked God aloud for the great miracle He was about to do. Christ being One with God, this prayer was the conscious realisation of God's Will, and to a thoughtful bystander like St. John, a clear manifestation of His Divinity.

The immediate result of the miracle was that many of the Jews believed on Jesus. Some went and told the Pharisees in Jerusalem; and the Sadducee chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council. This council, the Sanhedrin, met to decide what was to be done. The unscrupulous Sadducee high priest, Caiaphas, set forth, probably, his own decided policy that Jesus should be put to death, and was guided by a mysterious irony to interpret truly, though unconsciously, the results of the death of Jesus.

St. John xi. verses 49-54: 'And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know noth-

ing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation: and not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death. Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews: but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples.'

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE GOSPELS (THE LAST JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM—AT JERICHO—ZACCHAEUS—THE HOME AT BETHANY—THE MESSIANIC ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM—THE TEACHING IN THE TEMPLE).

THE place to which our Lord retired with His disciples after He left the home at Bethany, and the sisters happy in the society of their brother restored to life, was called Ephraim. From the notices in the Synoptic Gospels, this place seems to have been somewhere on the borders of Peræa and Galilee. It was not long before He set out for His last journey to Jerusalem. He had resolved to go up to the Passover, and to offer Himself as the Messiah for the acceptance or rejection of the nation. After a short stay in Ephraim, he seems to have journeyed along the northern borders of Galilee, perhaps in order to enable His disciples to visit their friends; perhaps also to enable the disciples from Galilee to join Him. The many women mentioned in St. Mark xv. verses 40, 41, as having come up with Him to Jerusalem, must clearly have been with Him on this last journey. St. Luke records the first incident by the way in chapter xvii. verses 12-19: 'And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: and they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.'

It is to this part of the journey that we must assign the teaching of our Lord on divorce, which is of a very definite and important nature. The duty of Christians is themselves to observe and to teach others 'to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you' (St. Matthew xxviii. verse 20).

The utterance of this important discourse was an answer to ques-

tions put by the Pharisees, who perhaps thought that if Christ spoke out boldly against divorce in Peræa, Herod's territory, the fury of Herodias might be aroused against Him, as it had been against John the Baptist. They also judged that the popular feeling would be against the high and severe views of our Lord; and in this they were not far wrong, for the disciples, when they were alone with Jesus in the house, expressed their dissatisfaction, and asserted that, if Christ's view were to be accepted, it was better for a man not to marry at all. But our Lord made no concession, and His words on divorce remain binding on all Christians to-day as when they were first spoken.

The historic Churches have, on the whole, adhered to this ideal. Experience confirms the wisdom of our Lords' plain prohibition of divorce, for such easy customs of divorce have been found to mark the decadence of great nations; for example, the Roman Empire.

St. Matthew xix. verses 3-9: 'The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.'

After our Lord had given this lofty teaching on marriage in answer to the Pharisees, He returned to the house in which He was staying; and there the disciples asked Him again of the same matter. The teaching was repeated and emphasised.

It was to this same house that they brought young children that He might touch them; that is, put His hand on them and bless them.

St. Mark x. verses 13-16: 'And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of

God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.'

The children were no doubt brought by their mothers. But the disciples considered it quite beneath the dignity of the Great Teacher to occupy Himself with such small things. Our Lord reminded His disciples of what He had already taught them, that the Kingdom of God had to be received as by a little child, in humble trust and meek obedience. His folding of the little ones in His arms and blessing them has been a perpetual consecration of child-life. Childhood He taught thus to be a holy state, as He had taught marriage to be a holy state, both to be revered and guarded against degradation, on pain of the destruction of national as well as family life. The consecration of the whole common life of man was from the first the destined work of the Gospel.

In other passages in the Evangelists we have unmistakable teachings of our Lord revealing the high value and the sacredness of childhood. St. Matthew xviii. verses 1-6: 'At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefor shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.'

Little had His disciples dreamt of the answer that Christ gave to them: the greatest in the kingdom of heaven was to be like a little child. Indeed, the child-character is declared to be essential for membership in the kingdom of heaven. The self-seeking, ambitious spirit, which had dictated the disciples' question, must be put away. The humble, trustful spirit of a little child must take its place. Talking about children, it is encouraging to think that we have the example of a perfect boy in our Saviour, and know how good, and true, and obedient He was in His early days. He asks children to be like Him, as He was when a sinless child. One of the most remarkable things about our Saviour is that whatever He asks us to attempt, He has Himself already accomplished, and thus shown us the way to success. 'Whosoever shall offend' means cause to offend or cause to stumble, and the whole passage we have just now read is a tremendous warning against leading astray a child, or a simple child-like Christian—either wilfully or by neglect.

The next incident which meets us in this record of the last days in Peræa, is the story of the young ruler who came running in his eagerness, and kneeling, asked Christ: 'Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good, but one, that is God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother. And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions' (St. Mark x. verses 17-22). Dante calls this 'The Great Refusal.'

The strangeness of the address, 'Good Master,' from Jewish lips, suggests the meaning of our Lord's inquiry: 'Why callest thou me good? there is none good save one, that is God.' The Lord seems to ask: Why do you kneel down and address me as good, an epithet belonging to God? Do you realise that if I deserve to be called good, I must be one with God?

This young man was serious and earnest, and had done his best to live up to his light, and Jesus looking intently upon him, loved him, and called him to the highest honour He could bestow upon him: to take his place, like Matthew, at his Master's side. But Jesus saw that there was one obstacle to prevent this young man following Him as His disciple. He had great wealth, and he loved his possessions. Till his heart was set on Christ alone, he could not really be His disciple. Christ had already repeatedly laid down the conditions of discipleship. St. Luke xiv. verse 33: ' . . . whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.' The event justified our Lord's insight into the human heart.

Therefore our Lord told the young man to get rid at once of the obstacle, to give away the wealth on which his heart was set, and to give his heart to Christ and His service. It is evident from this that the command has no application to Christians generally, but only to those whose wealth draws their hearts away from Christ. The willing surrender of the heart to Christ is the essential thing He requires in a disciple. A disciple may possess and administer wealth blamelessly, provided wealth does not possess his heart. Nevertheless, our Lord goes on to teach His disciples that there is a real danger to be guarded against—the danger that a man

should learn to trust in riches, and so cease to trust in God.

Before he left Peræa on the last journey to Jerusalem, our Lord predicted to His Apostles the approaching end. They were on the way when He told them, saying: 'Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles; and they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day he shall rise again' (St. Mark x. verses 33, 34).

St. Mark tells us they were amazed and afraid, and it is evident from what followed later, that they did not really understand Him. And now our Lord passed for the last time the fords of Jordan, leaving Peræa and Galilee behind, and setting His face towards Jerusalem, where the last great sacrifice of a life of self-sacrifice was to be offered up by Him. He came on this occasion openly, not as a private man as at the feast of Tabernacles, but as a Leader at the head of His disciples.

Jericho, about six miles from Jordan, was the first city our Lord and His band of followers approached, by the main caravan road from Arabia and Damascus. The fame of the great Prophet of Nazareth must have been particularly well known in Jericho: not only must they have heard of the wondrous works He had done in Galilee and Peræa, but the greatest of His works had shortly before been performed at no considerable distance, at the village of Bethany. They knew at Jericho of His raising of Lazarus from the dead, and they knew also that the Sanhedrin was bitterly opposed to Him and had resolved on His death. The news that Jesus was coming had spread before Him, and long before the band of pilgrims to the Passover, who accompanied Jesus, came in sight of Jericho, the inhabitants had come out to see the great Prophet. A crowd lined the road, and among them but in a tree, above the head of the others, the chief of the publicans (*i.e.* head of the Customs' collectors at Jericho) was waiting.

St. Luke xix. verses 1-10: 'And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. And, behold, there was a man named Zacchæus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus, who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchæus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and re-

ceived him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner. And Zacchæus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor: and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.'

All that Zacchæus had hoped when he climbed the sycamore tree was to see Jesus as He passed by; he could not have dreamed that the great Prophet would take any notice of a despised publican. But as Jesus, at the head of His Apostles, passed underneath the overhanging branches of the sycamore, He looked up and their eyes met in the shock of recognition, and with the infinite graciousness of a King, Jesus invited himself to be a guest at the house of Zacchæus. It was as though Jesus had come to Jericho for this very purpose. Overwhelmed with joy, Zacchæus made haste and came down, and received Jesus in his house. The favour shown to the publican moved the crowd to indignation. They all murmured at the great Prophet's action in coming as a guest to a man who was a sinner. Their indignation may have spurred the generous desire of Zacchæus to show himself worthy of the great honour done to him; at any rate, he stood forth before the indignant crowd, and, addressing himself to Jesus, declared his decision to live a new life. He gave half of his wealth to the poor from that hour; and he offered to any one from whom he had extorted money, to restore it fourfold. He had worshipped money in the past. For the future he sacrificed everything to live so that Jesus might approve of his life; and Jesus, who read his heart, declared the reality of his salvation. He had been one of the lost. Now he was one of the saved, 'for the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost' (verse 10).

This illuminating glimpse into the house of Zacchæus is all we are given. But we can guess with what joy the sinner, who had been lifted into the higher life by the Divine Friendship of our Lord, sat that night, like Mary, at his Heavenly Guest's feet and heard His word.

Next morning Jesus resumed His journey to Jerusalem; but as he left Jericho with His disciples and a great number of people, 'blind Bartimæus, the son of Timæus, sat by the highway side, begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me. And many charged him that he should hold his peace:

but he cried the more a great deal, Thou son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee. And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus. And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way' (St. Mark x. verses 46-62).

The effort made to induce the blind man to hold his peace came without doubt from our Lord's disciples, and for a very weighty reason. Jesus had not yet made a public claim to the Messiahship, though since Peter's confession the Twelve Apostles at any rate knew that their Master was the Messiah, but He had charged them not to make this known. Here was Bartimæus crying out: 'Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.' This name, 'Son of David,' was well known to mean the Messiah. Jesus, however, was going up to Jerusalem for the purpose of offering Himself to the nation's acceptance as the Messiah, and He was not afraid of the blind man's confession. So He called him and healed him. Bartimæus has a lesson for us. He knew what he wanted, and he had faith that Christ could supply it, and by persistency he obtained the deliverance he desired. There are many of us in as great a need of spiritual sight as Bartimæus was of physical. We can obtain it, if we seek it with the same faith and from the same Source.

After He left Jericho, our Lord travelled to Bethany, and there He stayed, as before, with Martha and Mary. He arrived there six days before the Passover. The result of His presence at Bethany was that a great number of people from Jerusalem came out, not only to see Him, but to see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead. Many of them, we learn from St. John, before they went away believed on Jesus, that is to say, accepted Him as the Messiah. The Sadducee chief priests, on hearing of this, consulted together how they might put Lazarus as well as Jesus to death; thus to remove the living proof of the great miracle as well as the Worker of it. While this plot was being hatched at Jerusalem, Jesus was resting in the peace and quiet of the happy home at Bethany. The atmosphere of love and devotion there must have been comforting and helpful to our Lord's human nature, sorely tried by the bitter hatred of the leaders of His own nation, whom the proof of His divine power and His divine goodness merely served to exasperate against Him. It seems every fitting

that our Lord's last home on earth should have been the house of friendship, the home at Bethany. The spirit that holds together the home-life is the spirit that holds together the life of the larger family—the Church. Without the spirit of friendship to bind together its members, the true life of the family is not possible. Friendship is essential to right relations between husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, and even masters and servants. Our Lord's consecration of human life by making the spirit of home the spirit of His New Society, 'Henceforth I call you not servants,. . . . but I have called you friends' (St. John xv. verse 15), reminds us that the felt presence of Christ was intended to give the standard of life in the Christian home as well as in the Christian Church. What would Christ have us to do? This is the standard of conduct in all situations of life. Anything which tends to loosen the ties of home-life is hostile to the ideal put before us by Christ's example. The disuse of such simple practices as grace before meals has a bad influence, more serious and more far-reaching than is generally supposed. The needless abandonment of the life of the family circle for the life of the hotel and the restaurant has the same effect, and ultimately issues in the disintegration of the life of the community.

We return to the home of Bethany. Jesus arrived on the Friday. The next day was the Sabbath. And they made Him a supper. Here we may look at our picture on hospitality. The supper was not at the house of Martha, but at the house of Simon the Leper, a man who no doubt had been healed by Jesus, and who gave his guest-chamber for the supper with grateful love. Martha managed the service of the meal, and Lazarus was one of the guests. Martha's sister was also present. St. John xii. verse 3: 'Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.' This touch is unmistakably that of an eye-witness.

St. Matthew, with whose account should be read that of St. John, records the fact that Mary first anointed the head of Jesus as He reclined at table, no doubt before she anointed the feet, which was a very unusual thing, an expression of deepest veneration. St. Matthew also records the fact that the pound of spikenard was in an 'alabaster,' a cylindrical flask made of this stone, likened by a Roman writer to a closed rosebud. Genuine spikenard, as the words of the original Greek may best be rendered, is a very precious perfume of the consistency of ointment. It was worth a large sum, nearly 9*l*. Mary had kept this precious possession against

the day of her Lord's burial, and we may gather from her action that He had told her plainly that the end was at hand, and that He was to die that very week.

The indignant objection of Judas Iscariot, which actually succeeded in carrying away some of the other disciples, drew from our Lord a defence of her action which is full of pathos. The love which was the master-passion of Mary's soul gains by contrast with the covetousness which ruled the mind of Judas. But that He, who for our sakes came down from heaven, should have had to plead for the last service of love, is touching, and in keeping with all the sorrow and suffering our Lord had soon to bear.

Before we come to the next step in our Lord's progress towards the end of His ministry and His life, the entry into Jerusalem as the Messianic King, we may with advantage endeavour to realise a picture of Jerusalem as it is to-day, to help us to see with the mind's eye Jerusalem as it was then. We have read in our Old Testament of the building of Solomon's magnificent Temple, and of its destruction by the Chaldeans in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. The Temple which was built by the exiles, after the return from Babylon, was inferior to Solomon's Temple, and was altogether surpassed by the Temple of Herod, begun in the year 20 B.C. At the time of our Lord's entry into Jerusalem, Herod's Temple had been forty and six years in building, and was not finished for about thirty years after. The site of the Temple is a very beautiful one; it is also a very ancient one. Psalm xlviii. verse 2: 'Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King. Not only had Solomon's Temple, Zerubbabel's Temple, and Herod's Temple stood there, but earlier still David built an altar there and offered sacrifices. 2 Samuel xxiv. verse 25: 'And David built there an altar unto the Lord, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So the Lord was intreated for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel.'

The Mosque of Omar which still stands above the sacred rock is called by the name of Khalif Omar, who took Jerusalem from the Christians in 637 A.D. and built a wooden mosque. Abdel-Melek, the sixteenth Khalif, erected a Kubbeh, or dome, over the sacred rock in 688 A.D. This was the original of the present building. Instead of a pavement, the original bare rock floors the centre of this building. The rock is railed off as being too holy to be trodden by the foot of man. Everything is of the best: priceless Persian tiles adorn the exterior. The result is truly beautiful as well as poetic. Out of the crevices of the stonework yellow-eyed hys-

sop peeps, and clothes with beauty brick, and stone, and marble. Doves in large numbers build their nests in between work of indescribable beauty. The interior abounds with different and exquisite kinds of wood, of marble, of stained-glass windows. Around this building lies the Temple area: a scene of a variety and a beauty that baffles description. The ground you walk on is in part flagged; in part it is green grass diversified with many-coloured flowers. Under the silvery leafage of the olive trees occasional groups in Eastern garb met the eye. Moslems are freely admitted, at any and at all times. Christians, who here indeed are made to feel as if they were aliens, are only admitted when they have procured an order from their embassy.

In the Temple precincts there are several wells, whence I saw men filling their skins. Little Arab children were lying about among the scarlet anemones which here abound. The walls of the Temple area are partly in ruins, but the gates are still to be seen. There is a wonderful view, full of the memories of that unparalleled history. Just outside the outer walls are the tombs of the Hebrew kings. The Valley of Hinnom lies deep below. The Brook of Kidron flows hard by. The village of Siloam which we have been speaking about is to be seen on the opposite hillside. As a background to everything rise the hills, brilliant in green in the spring-time. The nearest is the range known as the Mount of Olives. The quietness here is profound. You seem to hear the stillness in that sort of day-dream which one experiences when one is taken out of oneself by the realised nearness of persons and scenes of the mighty past.

From this very place Christ had often gazed on the same view. It is an unforgettable experience to realise this truth. Moving to the Mount of Olives, the view changes: undulating hill ranges, fold within fold, one gently melting into another, form a continuous but ever-changing panorama of surprises, as the clouds from above send down light or shade on the hillsides. In one direction your eyes follow the way to Bethlehem; in another you see, in a hollow, a sheet of water, glinting like polished steel, which is no other than the Dead Sea. Beneath at your feet, amongst the low and weather-worn hills, which give you the impression of rising and falling as if breathing, there lies a village which was once the Bethphage of the Gospels, the very place from which our Lord directed the ass to be fetched for His use to ride upon at that memorable entry into Jerusalem which we are shortly about to recall. Donkeys and naules wander in search of pasture along the pathless, but oftentrod hill slopes. Here and there a shepherd leads his black flock

(a feature of that neighbourhood) into the mountains around, which are studded at intervals with a few olive trees, or perhaps a patch of verdure, wrested, as it were, from the grip of the arid rock and the scorching sun.

It is eventide. All is calm and still and serene as the shadows fall. The sun seems to be bidding us adieu; the golden gates of cloud are opening to receive him. Already the silver moon is sailing up the sky, ready to take her place in the firmament: her court of stars are following in her track and ever changing to our eye; but ever changeless in God's supreme order, the host of heaven obeys His Sovereign Will. And all this while one's soul is filled with unspeakable wonder and awe at the mystery of the future before us when life's sunset shall come; with a longing to penetrate the darkness of the Unknown but only Real Life hidden with Christ in God, until He shall reveal all to us when, like England's great poet, we have crossed the bar.

We must return now to Jerusalem and our Lord's entry. The Sabbath was over at Bethany. The morning of the first day of the week which we know as Passion Week had come. Jesus prepared to make His entry into Jerusalem as the Messianic King. The entry into Jerusalem took place as it did by the deliberate intention of our Lord. He intended to make a great appeal to Jerusalem by the sight of an entry consciously based on the words of the prophet Zechariah. To see the Kingly Figure riding upon an ass, the animal of peace, as the horse is of war, surrounded by the rejoicing procession, would remind every one of the words of the prophet. Zechariah ix. verse 9: 'Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass and (even) upon a colt the foal of an ass.'

This was a symbolic appeal perfectly understood by Eastern minds; a silent appeal to the rulers of the whole nation which would speak more eloquently than any words. Would they accept or reject this Messiah? Our Lord foresaw what would happen. Not so His disciples, who were evidently full of the highest hopes, in spite of all their Master's warnings. It was a morning of early spring when the procession set out from the home of Bethany. All the four Evangelists record the entry. The three first describe the approach from Bethany; St. John alone takes the standpoint of one who was with the multitude that came out from Jerusalem to meet Him.

St. Matthew xxi. verse 1: 'And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples, saying unto them, Go into the village over

against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her; loose them, and bring them unto me. And if any man say aught unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them. All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass. And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them, and brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon. And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way. And the multitude that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest. And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.'

St. John alone records the use of branches of palm trees at the entry of our Lord into Jerusalem; they were borne by the people from Jerusalem who went out to meet the Messiah. These people were Galilean and Peræan pilgrims who had come up for the feast. Palm trees are rare in Palestine now. In the days of our Lord it was different: Jericho was then, in the first half of the first century, the city of palm trees, just as it had been in the days of the Old Testament. The palm tree was an emblem of righteousness. The date is a favourite food of the Eastern peoples. Even camels feed on them. The palm tree comes in very handily for many different uses; the leaves for roofing; the branches for fences; the fibre for ropes and baskets. The syrup 'dibs' (date honey) is sweet to drink. When anxious to do honour to a victor in a triumphal procession, people used to wave palm fronds in front of him. Thus the palm branches were waved for Jesus upon the occasion of His public entry into Jerusalem, as a symbol of triumph and a sign of welcome to the Messiah. At some spot on the well-known caravan road between Jericho and Jerusalem, the multitude which was following Christ met the multitude which was coming out from Jerusalem to greet Him.

St. Luke xix. verse 37: 'And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen.'

This seems to tell us that it was just when the point on the road was reached where Jerusalem comes in view that the whole

multitude began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice, in words partly taken from the 118th Psalm, and partly taken from the people's responses used with this Psalm on solemn festivals. The words given by St. Matthew are: 'Hosanna to the Son of David: blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.' Hosanna is taken from Psalm cxviii. verse 25, which begins, 'Annah hoshi'ah na' ('Save now!' or 'Save, pray!'). It was used as a shout of joy and welcome; a kind of holy 'Hurrah,' as it has been quaintly called.

It was customary for the people of Jerusalem to greet the pilgrims to the Passover on their arrival, but this was the triumphant welcome of One who claimed to be the Messiah. The Pharisees who were among the crowd noticed it and said: 'Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him' (St. John xii. verse 19). Then they turned to the Master Himself in helpless rage.

St. Luke xix. verses 39, 40: 'And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples. And he answered and said unto them, I tell you, that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.'

The procession advanced towards Jerusalem, and it seems to have been just where the full view of the city opens to the eye, that the procession paused, and our Lord gazed upon the city and 'wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation' (St. Luke xix. verses 41-44).

Our Lord's bodily eyes beheld the glory both of the Temple and the city, and at the same time, with His mind's eye, He saw as in a vision the Roman camp, the Roman legions, enclosing all in a fatal and crushing grasp, till all those walls and buildings lay even with the ground, and all the crowded population within them was laid low. This wonderful prophetic vision of the ruin of that proud city set forth in our Lord's words, proved, as we know, in a few years' time, literally true. It was the spirit of blind pride and self-confidence, the spirit which wrought Christ's death, the spirit which refused to be enlightened, even by Christ Himself, that some forty years after, by rash defiance of Roman power, brought on the Holy

City the utter destruction over which our Lord now wept as He foresaw and foretold it.

Jesus had wept by the grave of Lazarus, and now wept at the terrible judgment, which those who had already plotted His death, because He had raised Lazarus to life, were bringing on themselves and on their city.

The question arises: How is this hearty welcome of the multitude to be reconciled with the clamouring for the Lord's Crucifixion, which, later on in the week, overcame the reluctance of Pilate? The multitude who went out to meet Jesus consisted chiefly of pilgrims come up from the country for the feast. They were friendly to Jesus, but the Jews of Jerusalem were mostly hostile to Him. Their leaders, the chief priests and scribes, sought to take Jesus by craft, and put Him to death.

St. Mark xiv. verse 2: 'But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar of the people.'

The traitor disciple sought opportunity to betray Jesus to them in the absence of the friendly multitude. St. Luke xxii. verse 6: 'And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray him unto them in the absence of the multitude.'

Still, it must be admitted that the enthusiasm of the pilgrims which lasted while they expected His acceptance by the heads of the nation, and by the people of Jerusalem, rapidly vanished when they realised His rejection. They had no leader, and His condemnation both by the Jews and the Romans, brought to bear upon them the whole forces of spiritual authority and material power. The unexpectedness of the blow delivered by the chief priests stunned the leaderless multitude, and they submitted as they had often submitted before. That the people did not really understand who this Prophet of Nazareth was, whom they first welcomed and then deserted, is plain enough when we remember that His own disciples did not fully understand the meaning of His Entry into Jerusalem until after the Resurrection.

Within the gates, the citizens, as distinguished from the pilgrim multitudes, displayed their ignorance or indifference by such a question as, 'Who is this?' To which the pilgrims replied, 'This is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee' (St. Matthew xxi. 10, 11).

Our Lord must have felt in this attitude of the people of Jerusalem some foreshadowing of His coming rejection. He must have felt also the sadness that had moved Him even to tears at the first sight of Jerusalem, as He looked now on the crowded streets, and the magnificent Temple filled with multitudes of worshippers, and realised how near was the end—the end of His own ministry and

life, and in a few short years the end of the Temple and of the nation. He went into the Temple, but we are not told that He taught on this occasion. He seems to have looked round Him at all that was going on, and silently to have returned to Bethany with His disciples. There the night was spent, and the next morning, the morning of the second day in Passion Week, the Monday, He went with His disciples again early to the Temple. At that hour the Temple was crowded with worshippers, and the traffic which our Lord had once before attempted to stop was going on. The traffickers consisted largely of money-changers, who changed the money of Jews from foreign countries, in order that they might make their contributions, as was required by the Temple authorities, in Jewish money. Besides the money-changers, there were numbers of sellers of doves, which were used for sacrifices. The high priest himself made a profit by selling these doves to the merchants, who sold them in the Temple, and was thus himself interested in maintaining this traffic.

The stir of this traffic in the Temple courts must have interfered with the quiet meditation and prayer for which the Temple was intended, and our Lord was indignant at the sight.

St. Matthew xxi. 12-16: 'And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves, and said unto them. It is written. My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves. And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them. And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased, and said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?'

Our Lord's judgment on the traffic in the Temple was really a judgment on the high priest, and the whole body of priests who permitted this desecrating traffic, and made money out of it. But they did not dare openly to interfere with Jesus, as at that early hour the Temple was full of pilgrims from Galilee and Peræa, whose enthusiasm for Jesus was unmistakable. The chief priests and scribes then contented themselves with remonstrating at the Messianic claim implied in the children's hosannas, hoping to induce Jesus to silence the children, as the Pharisees had attempted to induce Him to silence His disciples the day before, during the triumphant procession into Jerusalem.

Our Lord's reply amounted to an acceptance of the position of the Messiah, and the hosannas were appropriate as an acknowledgment of the Messianic works of healing He had just done in the Temple. Thus, the second day of Passion Week was marked by our Lord's manifestation of Himself as Messiah, by His mighty works in the great centre of national worship. The night was again spent at Bethany, and on the Tuesday morning early our Lord was again in the Temple, where He walked and taught in the Porches; and where soon after His arrival he was met by the chief priests, who had probably held a meeting the night before, and decided on challenging His authority for all He did.

We read in St. Matthew xxi. verses 23-27: 'And when he was come into the Temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority? And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? but if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all held John as a prophet. And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them. Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.'

The chief priests being thus silenced, the Pharisees, with the Herodians (the party who accepted Herod's kingship as rightful), devised a subtle question to entrap Jesus into an answer that would, they hoped, either give ground for an accusation of sedition against the Roman empire, or, if He avoided that, would involve Him in the discredit of supporting the Roman rule, which would shake His popularity with the fiery patriots of Galilee.

We find the account of this in St. Matthew xxii. verses 15-22: 'Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk. And they sent unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man; for thou regardest not the person of men. Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou, Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not? But Jesus perceived their wickedness and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? [They say unto him, Cæsar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Cæsar the things

which are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's. When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way.'

We will take one only of the other questions put to our Lord by His opponents in the Temple. We read as follows in St. Mark xii. verses 28-34: 'And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all? And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he: and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.'

Our Lord now left the Porches, and turned to go up into the Temple building, and there He sat down, perhaps on the flight of steps, and watched the people. St. Mark's account of the incident gives a lifelike picture (xii. verses 41-44): 'And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: for all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.'

At this point we may mention a very important event which occurred in the Temple. This was the symbolic coming of the Gentile world to Christ in the person of its representatives—certain Greeks who wished to see Him. St. John alone gives an account of this.

St. John xii. verses 20-33: 'And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: the same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew:

and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus. And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour. Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him. Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes. Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die.'

This seems, from its position in St. John's account, to have been the last occurrence on this third day of Passion Week. That some of our Lord's teaching, which we shall presently consider, belongs to this and the following day is probable, for we read of its effects (St. John xii. verses 42, 43): 'Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.'

With the great series of woes against the false teaching of the Pharisees, our Lord seems to have closed His teaching in the Temple. Each woe in St. Matthew's account in the twenty-fourth chapter begins with the words, 'Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites.' But even in the midst of His denunciations our Lord keeps His tender love and pity for the lost city and its inhabitants.

St. Matthew xxiii. verses 34-39: 'Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which

are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.'

The most important part of our Lord's last teaching now claims our attention. This is the series of parables spoken in the Temple to the people with the chief priests and Pharisees, who heard and understood their application to themselves. The first of these parables in the Temple is the Parable of the Two Sons. St. Matthew xxi. verses 28-31: 'But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterwards he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.'

The first son represented the publicans and harlots, whose refusal of the father's call was implied in their lawless life; yet afterwards they repented and obeyed the call. The other son, who made a great profession of obedience, represented the Pharisees, who felt no need of repentance; and so the outcasts of society go into the kingdom of heaven before the false professors of religion.

Immediately after this parable came a far more important one. It is found in St. Matthew xxi. verses 33-39: '. . . There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country: when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more (greater) than the first, and they did unto them likewise. But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.'

In order that the chief priests might perceive unmistakably that He spoke of them, our Lord drove home the meaning of this parable. The neglect and unbelief shown by the son representing the Pharisees in the former parable, is seen in this parable intensified into deliberate rebellion, carried to its extreme expression in the murder by the husbandmen of the king's son. The husbandmen are the Jewish nation, represented and condemned in the person of their leaders, who had at this very time already murdered Jesus in their hearts. The owner of the vineyard was, of course, God, the Father, who had leased His vineyard to Israel of old; in accordance with the terms of the lease they were to give Him His proper share of the fruits. He sent His servants for the fruits, but the husbandmen received them with ill-usage and even put them to death.

He sent to them a greater servant, John the Baptist, and he received the same treatment. At last He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, and they cast Him out of the vineyard and killed Him. Even the chief priests and Pharisees in reply to our Lord's question, 'What will the lord of the vineyard do to these husbandmen?' (verse 40), were obliged to answer, 'He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their season' (verse 41).

'And Jesus said unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? Therefore I say unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.'

This terrible condemnation enraged the chief priests and Pharisees, who felt that it was passed on them. St. Matthew xxii. verse 46: 'But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.'

Jesus spoke to them yet another parable, the parable known as the Marriage of the King's Son. St. Matthew xxii. verses 2-14: 'The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding and they would not come. Again he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another

to his merchandise: and the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth; and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good, and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen.'

The marriage feast is the Kingdom of God. The King's Son is the Christ. The chosen guests are the people of the Old Covenant, the Jews. The prophets of the Old Testament had been sent to them with the King's invitation. They had rejected it, and the invitation had been repeated again and again. Judgment on the nation followed and was to follow at the hands of the Romans, who were the instruments of Divine Justice, as the Chaldæans had been in the days of Jeremiah.

The second part of the parable applies specially to the disciples of our Lord, to those who had accepted the invitation and had come to the marriage feast of the Gospel. For each of them the King supplies a wedding garment. The wedding garment is indispensable, and one of the guests who has insolently refused to put it on—breaking the harmony of the happy company—is thus, by his own action, unfitted to remain and is removed from the feast. What is the wedding garment? Clearly the Christ-likeness, the righteousness that Christ bestows, the fruit of intimate union with Him. Putting on the wedding garment is described by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans as putting on the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans xiii. verse 14), and again in the Epistle to the Ephesians as putting off the old man and putting on the new (Ephesians iv. verses 22-24), and again in the Epistle to the Galatians, 'as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ' (Galatians iii. verse 27).

To refuse the wedding garment, as the guest had done, is to put oneself outside the light and joy of the king's guest-chamber, in outer darkness by contrast with brightness within. 'Many are

called, but few are chosen' (St. Matthew xxii. verse 14). Many receive God's call, but only those who take the wedding garment, freely offered them, occupy their place among God's chosen.

This and the preceding parable belong to our Lord's last teaching in the Temple, which ended, as we have already seen, with that great denunciation of the Temple and of Jerusalem, with which He left it for the last time, saying, 'Behold, your house (*i.e.*, the Temple) is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord' (St. Matthew xxiii. verses 38, 39).

After His solemn farewell to the Temple, our Lord and His disciples left Jerusalem to return to Bethany, as they had done on each evening of this week. On this occasion they halted on the Mount of Olives, and sat down in full sight of the magnificent buildings of the Temple. As they had left the Temple, our Lord had predicted to them its coming destruction: 'Seest thou these great buildings? There shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down' (St. Mark xiii. verse 2). This prediction, it may be observed, was literally fulfilled not many years after, when the Romans took Jerusalem.

Meditating on these words, four of our Lord's disciples came to Him and asked Him, as He sat on the Mount of Olives, 'Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?' (St. Mark xiii. verse 4).

Our Lord replied with a long prediction of the signs which should introduce the ruin of Jerusalem, when the Son of Man was to come in judgment upon that guilty city. That coming was to be soon. 'Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away' (St. Mark xiii. verses 30, 31).

The Lord had thus answered at great length the disciples' question *what* the signs were to be, and now turned to their first question, *when* these things were to be. They were to be in the time of that generation, but the exact date was not known, even to the Lord Himself. 'But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father' (St. Mark xiii. verse 32).

The uncertainty as to the date was intended to produce in His disciples the most intense and unwearying watchfulness. 'Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his home, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and

commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrow, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch' (St. Mark xiii. verses 33-37).

In close connection with this teaching of our Lord which we have been considering, the suddenness of His coming and the need of constant watchfulness on the part of His disciples, are two parables, the Parable of the Ten Virgins and the Parable of the Talents. They were probably both of them spoken on the Mount of Olives, and addressed to the disciples, who had just listened to the discourse on the Last Things. That of the Virgins followed directly out of the conclusion of our Lord's discourse, for so to live as to be always prepared to meet the Lord, however sudden His coming, is its main lesson.

St. Matthew xxv. verses 1-13: 'Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterwards came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.'

In this beautiful parable the word-picture of a Jewish wedding is used by our Lord to convey a lesson of profound importance, the need of personal preparation, in order to receive Him at His coming, and to be with Him after it. At evenfall in the East, it was the custom for the bridegroom, with his friends, to come to the house of the bride and take her to his own house. On the way they were joined by the bride's young friends, the virgins of the parable, who accompanied the procession into the hall where the marriage feast was held. The bridegroom of the parable was coming from far away, so that it was not known at what hour he

would arrive. The five wise virgins had provided not only lamps, but oil for the lamps; the five foolish virgins had provided lamps, but had neglected to provide the necessary oil. The meaning is plain. The virgins represent the disciples of Christ; they have all the same good intentions, but five carry out and five neglect the necessary preparations for performance. The oil represents the inward spirit of the Christian life, without which the lamps—the outward part of Christianity—will not fulfil their purpose, and enable Christians to shine as lights in the world. The need of a continual attitude of watchfulness and expectation, in order that the coming of Christ to the soul may not be missed, is the practical purpose of the teaching of this parable.

Though some of the first Christians for a time misunderstood the form of their Lord's predictions, and expected a visible and material, instead of a spiritual, return, their attitude of longing for the presence of the Lord was the right one. To love the Lord's appearing was a note of true discipleship in St. Paul's opinion, and if that coming is spiritually understood, it is a note to-day. Our Lord's own words: 'I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you' (rather, 'am coming') (St. John xiv. verse 18), remind us that the coming of Christ is ever near at hand. He who came to Saul on the road to Damascus, and to the Church at Pentecost, is ever coming to individuals and societies if only they are longing for, and expectant of, His coming. Their own want of preparation, their own unreadiness, closed the door of the hall of feasting against the foolish virgins; and it is possible, in the same way, for Christians to close the door of opportunity against themselves. Preparation is necessary if we are not to miss the joy of our Lord's coming, and its sequel—the joy of His realised Presence.

The Parable of the Talents which immediately follows in St. Matthew's Gospel deals with the active service required by Christ from His disciples. Like the Parable of the Ten Virgins, that of the Talents was addressed to disciples, and its lessons are eternally applicable to Christian life. True spiritual life must issue in personal and purposeful service.

We find the parable in St. Matthew xxv. verses 14-30: 'For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But

he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

The Lord's coming is the culmination of the two parables. The waiting time in the Parable of the Ten Virgins is to be a watching time; the waiting time in the Parable of the Talents is to be a working time. To work as well as to watch is required of those who would have their Lord's approval on His return, and working is a result of watching. The servants in the Parable of the Talents are slaves to whom their master entrusts his property that they may use it so as to earn him an increase—as was the custom of the world at that time. The meaning of the parable is plain. The man travelling into a far country is Christ. The man's servants are Christ's disciples. The goods entrusted to the servants are all that a Christian has wherewith to serve Christ. Not only the natural gifts which we call talents, borrowing the familiar name from this very parable, but also the opportunities for service, the time, the money, all is given us to be used so as to bring forth fruits of increase.

The absent master in the parable entrusted to his three servants a different sum, according to the capacity of each. To one he gave five talents, about 1170*l.*; to another two, about 468*l.*; to another one, about 234*l.* While their master was away, by diligent trading the first and second servants doubled the money entrusted to them. The third servant, distrustful of his lord and slothful, buried in the earth the money committed to him. A long time passed. The lord returned, and the day of reckoning came, resulting in the highest praise and reward for the first two servants, and the just rejection of the third. Our Lord here reveals Himself as a strict but just master, whose love desires to lift His disciples to the highest and most arduous service of which they are capable. Nothing less than their best will satisfy Him. The reward of the disciple who has done his best is His Lord's ungrudging praise and approval, which enables him to enter into the joy of his Lord. There is a further reward of faithful service given. The faithful servant is given more work to do. That is the reward the strenuous Christian craves when this life's work is done, when in the heavenly city 'His servants shall serve him' (Revelation xxi. verse 13).

This parable has a very searching application to Christian life to-day. To make the best use of the powers we possess is a part of our religious duty: self-development as well as self-denial is a part of Christian service, and even as regards our spiritual powers, how commonly is the duty of self-development forgotten. How many persons who find time to study secular literature can find no time for the study of the Bible; how many never seriously study a single book of the Divine Library so as to grasp and understand it as a whole, but content themselves with reading texts and fragments here and there in an unconnected and perfunctory way which no one would dream of pursuing in dealing with any other literature. The wicked and slothful servant in the parable had no faith in his lord's goodwill, and no sense of his own duty: he gave up any effort as hopeless, certain that he could not satisfy his lord. Thus he brought on himself just condemnation when the day of reckoning came. This story has its warning message for Christians to-day to remind them that the very smallest endowments can be and must be used for Christ, if the disciple is to be greeted with the 'Well done, good and faithful servant,' at his Lord's coming.

Immediately after this parable follows the great Parable-vision of the Last Judgment recorded in St. Matthew xxv. verses 31-45: 'When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:

and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his **sheep from the goats**: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, **but the goats on the left**. Then shall the King say unto them on **his right hand**, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom **prepared for you** from the foundation of the world: for I was an **hungred**, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I **was a stranger**, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was **sick**, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an **hungred**, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an **hungred**, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an **hungred**, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.'

This vision sets forth very beautifully, in our Lord's clear and imperishable words, the great Christian truth that in serving our fellow-men we are serving our Lord; and that what is done to them is done to Him. The commentary which supplements this vision is to be found in St. John's Gospel, in the thirteenth chapter, in the washing of the disciples' feet, where our Lord first sets the example by doing what He Himself afterwards commanded. 'I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you' (St. John xiii. verse 15).

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE GOSPELS (THE SADDUCEE PLOT AND THE PHARISEES—THE TREACHERY OF JUDAS—THE INSTITUTION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER—GETHSEMANE—THE TRIAL BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN—THE TRIAL BEFORE PILATE—THE CRUCIFIXION AND DEATH).

WE have been considering our Lord's teaching during the early part of Passion Week, and we must now turn to the action of the leaders of the people in Jerusalem. Our Lord's triumphant entry into Jerusalem as the Messiah, and the boldness of His action in cleansing the Temple, had brought matters to a head. The attempts to ensnare Him in His talk, such as the question of paying tribute to Cæsar, had failed, and the Sadducee rulers of the nation felt that His mighty works, and His great reputation especially with the Galilean pilgrims who filled the city, made Him a real danger to their supremacy. They had already put themselves at the head of the Pharisee party after the raising of Lazarus, and the high priest, Caiaphas, had guided the decision of the Council of the chief priests and Pharisees to put Him to death. They had then, however, had no opportunity of taking Him, for He had retired into Peræa. Now He was in Jerusalem again and daily in the Temple, where He taught and worked miracles of healing. But they dared not attempt His arrest in the Temple, where the multitude of Galilean pilgrims would have stopped such action by force. An informal meeting was called to the palace of Caiaphas, near the Temple; and the meeting seems to have been held on the Tuesday night. To this centre of Sadducee rule assembled not only the chiefs of the priesthood and the Temple officials and the relatives of the high priest, who constituted the priestly council, but also the Pharisees and Scribes who had been so often and so severely denounced by Jesus. But eager as they were to put Him to death they could not risk an arrest at the moment, and intended to wait until after the Passover, when the pilgrims had dispersed. They were afraid of a tumult, for Pilate, who was in Jerusalem, had a double garrison in Antonia for the Passover, and would only have been too pleased to take vengeance for any disturbance, not only on the multitude, but on the leaders of the people. At this juncture Judas arrived at the high priest's palace and offered to betray

his Master. This was just what they wanted, and they 'weighed unto him' (R.V.) a sum of money to betray Jesus to them in the absence of the multitude. The price paid was thirty pieces of silver, about 3*l.* 15*s.*, the price of a slave. This price was paid out of the Temple moneys intended for the purchase of victims for sacrifice. The force of this symbolism is unmistakable. This purchase seems to be also a remarkable fulfilment of prophecy (in Zechariah xi. verse 12): 'So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver.'

The blood-money was paid and the traitor was to complete his bargain upon the first opportunity. How had Judas sunk to this depth of infamy? Apparently he had been bitterly disappointed at the refusal of Jesus to take the earthly kingdom of the Jewish Messiah; like the other Apostles, he had expected an earthly kingdom, and had been building upon a high and lucrative position for himself. The others' loyalty to Jesus had survived their disappointment, but whatever loyalty Judas had once had, had been eaten away by the deadly vice of covetousness which made him grudge Mary's precious spikenard, as though it was so much taken from his own pocket, and raise a brazen objection. To assist in founding an earthly kingdom had its material attractions for him, but as the spiritual nature of the Kingdom of God, which Jesus was then engaged in establishing, became unmistakable, Judas was disgusted, and His Lord's predictions of His own rejection, sufferings, and death, which were to end His ministry that very week, filled Judas with the bitterest resentment. He felt indignantly that he was to have nothing out of his connection with the Kingdom, but the discredit of being connected with a failure. What was then to be done? How could he make the best of a bad business? His ruling passion guided him, and he went and sold his Master to the priestly council. As he took the blood-money he may have congratulated himself that he was cheating his employers, for Jesus was certain to be arrested and put to death whether Judas led the Temple guards or not.

When Judas returned from Jerusalem on the Wednesday, his absence would probably be explained to the other disciples as connected with arrangements for the Feast of the Passover. This was to take place in Jerusalem, and our Lord sent two of the Apostles from Bethany to prepare the Paschal Supper at the house of one who was evidently a disciple, for no mere stranger would have acted as he did. St. Mark tells us, in chapter xiv. verses 13-16: 'And he sent forth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a

pitcher of water: follow him. And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? And he will shew you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us. And his disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover.'

In the East, a woman usually carried a pitcher of water; a man with a pitcher of water was apparently a signal arranged by Jesus to bring his messengers into touch with the owner of the house with whom he had made an arrangement.

In St. Matthew xxvi. verses 20-25, we read of the eating of the Passover and of a sad announcement which accompanied it. 'Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve. And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I? And he answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me. The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born. Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said.'

We notice that none of the other disciples suspected Judas, who with brazen assurance, asked, 'Is it I?' Jesus seems to have whispered to him the answer unheard by the rest. We learn from St. John that after that, the disciple whom Jesus loved, who was leaning on Jesus' breast, asked Jesus who it was, and Jesus indicated Judas by giving him the sop, adding to Judas words which no one else understood, 'That thou doest, do quickly' (St. John xiii. verse 27). Whereupon Judas went out, unrepentant, to consummate the betrayal.

We come now to the Lord's Supper. The following is St. Luke's account of the Institution of the Lord's Supper (St. Luke xxii. verses 19, 20): 'And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave it unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.'

St. Luke's account may be supplemented by St. Mark's in chapter xiv. verses 18-24: 'And as they sat and did eat, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, One of you which eateth with me shall betray me. And they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto him

one by one, Is it I? and another said, Is it I? And he answered and said unto them, It is one of the twelve, that dippeth with me in the dish. The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had never been born. And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body. And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.'

Here let us look at our picture of the Lord's Last Supper, and try to realise the touching scene. The Passover had been eaten before this solemn Institution took place, the Passover which had pointed in type to Him through all the past had now reached its consummation. He was the Lamb destined to be slain, 'the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world' (Revelation xiii. verse 8). The Great Sacrament He thus instituted was to be to His disciples the Sacrament of union with Him and with each other. In some mysterious and wonderful way He Himself, His spirit and His character, was to be conveyed through this rite to those who took part in it, in loving remembrance of Him. The Christian Church has from the first made the Lord's Supper its chief service; for a long period there was no other regular service, and it remains the supreme centre of the Church's worship and the symbol of the unity of all Christians as the one Body of the One Lord, the whole world over.

St. John, who omits the actual Institution because it had already been given by the other three Evangelists, gives much, not elsewhere recorded, that our Lord did and spoke on that eventful night in the Upper Room. In the thirteenth chapter, verses 2-17, we have some sacramental teaching of our Lord which emphasises the self-sacrifice which is one aspect of the Lord's Supper. The vividness of the details proclaims that the Evangelist was an eyewitness.

'And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him; Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; he riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. Then cometh he to Simon Peter; and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do

thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all. For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean. So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.'

Judas was one of those whose feet Jesus had washed, and, untouched by the Master's self-sacrificing service, he was betraying him already in his heart, and intending to do so in act that very night. Jesus set the example of self-sacrificing service for His servants to follow, and assured them that happy (rather than blessed, the same word used in the Beatitudes) are those who do so. When Judas had gone out Jesus began the discourses in the Upper Room with the words of triumph: 'Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him' (St. John xiii. verse 31).

The words in this discourse, 'Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you' (verse 33), drew from Peter a perplexed man's question, 'Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards. Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake. Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice' (St. John xiii. verses 36-38).

The following chapters of St. John's Gospel, xiv., xv., xvi., and xvii., embody the last conversation of our Lord with His disciples, which took place in the Upper Room after the institution of the Great Sacrament was over. Hours passed while our Lord poured forth His tenderest and deepest teachings for the comfort of His sorrowing disciples, from whom He was soon to be taken. He knew the suffering that lay before Him, but He thought only of the lesser sorrow and sufferings of His disciples. He sought to lessen

it by the revelation of the mysterious perfection of the union with Himself, which was to be theirs after He was gone, through the Comforter, the Holy Spirit. These discourses begin with the familiar words, 'Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you' (St. John xiv. verses 1, 2).

Then follows his conversation with Thomas and Philip, which gives the clearest revelation of His own Divinity (St. John xiv. verse 9): ' . . . Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?'

Very significantly does this revelation come from the lips of Him who had just instituted the Great Sacrament, the Holy Communion.

Then follows the promise of the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, which the Father would send in the Son's name. The intimate union of Christ and His Church is set forth with wonderful felicity in the allegory of the True Vine and its branches. The wonderful conversation and discourses of these chapters close with the last prayer—the prayer of consecration—of our Lord for His disciples, which fills the seventeenth chapter, and of which only a small part can be given here:

St. John xvii. verses 17-26: 'Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. Father I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.'

At the Feast of the Passover six Psalms were sung: Psalms cxiii. and cxiv., during the Feast; Psalms cxv., cxvi., cxvii., cxviii., at

the end. Christ and His disciples sang these Psalms, which were called the Hallel: this is the 'hymn' with which the Paschal Supper ended: 'And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives' (St. Matthew xxvi. verse 30).

The discourses which we have been considering, and the prayer followed the hymn, and after the last prayer was ended we read in St. John xviii., verse 1: 'When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples.'

Gethsemane, 'the oil-press,' was a garden on the slope of the Mount of Olives, named probably from a press used there to extract the oil. The spot identified with it is very small, and gnarled old olive trees still grow there. It was probably the property of a disciple of Christ's, 'for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples' (verse 2). It was, as the word 'resorted' signifies in the original, a place where His disciples assembled to listen to their Lord's teaching, and possibly, during the present visit to Jerusalem, had been used for passing the night: 'And in the day time he was teaching in the temple; and at night he went out, and abode in the mount that is called the mount of Olives' (St. Luke xxi. 37).

If this was so, Judas may have expected to find them all sleeping when he came to complete the betrayal. Jesus, however, did not retire to the garden to pass the night in sleep, but as at other critical periods of His life, in prayer. There was no idea of avoiding arrest, for Judas knew the place well, and had been probably told that they were going there when he was with them at the Paschal Supper. He guided the Temple guard there, not as one who was looking for Jesus, but as one who was certain where he would find Him. St. Mark records some memorable words of our Lord, warning the disciples of what was coming, which were spoken on the way to Gethsemane.

' . . . All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee' (St. Mark xiv. verses 27, 28).

The reference here is to Zechariah xiii. verse 7: 'Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn my hand upon the little ones.'

Then our Lord turned to Peter, who had asserted again that though the others might fail, he would not, and warned him that before the cock crowed twice he would deny Him thrice. When they came to Gethsemane, Jesus carried out His purpose of pre-

paring for His Passion by prayer to His Father in Heaven. But first He told the body of His disciples to sit still while he went to pray. St. Mark's account, which probably came from St. Peter, is full of graphic detail.

'And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy; and saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch. And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless, not what I will, but what thou wilt' (St. Mark xiv. verses 33-36).

Our Lord was so faint and weary and sorrowful at heart that he kneeled down and fell on His face on the ground, and in an agony of prayer He struggled with the temptation to avoid the horrors that lay before Him by refusing to drink the cup of anguish. But the brave spirit conquered, and He resolved to drink that cup and mentally drank it even to the bitter dregs. What was this cup the Father had given Him to drink, which he took and drained of His own free choice? It was not only the awful death of the Cross, intensified by the hatred and contempt of His own countrymen, it was not only the betrayal and the denial, and the desertion which He knew He was to meet from His own circle of friends and disciples, even from His chosen Apostles; it was all this and something besides far deeper and more wonderful. In some mysterious way on Him was laid 'the iniquity of us all' (Isaiah liii. verse 6). The marvellous prophetic vision of the suffering Messiah was in Him to be literally fulfilled. How he bore the burden of the whole world's sins is beyond our fathoming, but the healing power of His sufferings in removing sin from the heart of all sorts and conditions of men is a fact attested by the experience of centuries. By the power of His matchless sympathy He became as it were a nerve over which passed not only all the sorrows and the sufferings, but also all the sins of mankind. And all this He bore in His human nature as man, as the representative of the race. As St. Paul wrote to the Philippians (ii. verse 7), He 'emptied himself, taking the form of a (bond-servant, R.M.) servant, being made in the likeness of men' (R.V.).

Thus He accomplished the Father's loving purpose by offering the willing sacrifice of Himself to bring life, His own Life, to mankind. The life was made available through the death, and as a matter of experience the Saviour reigns over the heart of man from the Cross, which is His throne. The one alleviation He asked was denied

Him. He asked the three who best understood Him, Peter, James, and John, to watch with Him through His awful vigil, and He found them asleep. Perhaps too, the watching was intended to strengthen Peter against the coming temptation, for Jesus specially addressed him, 'Simon, sleepest thou? couldest not thou watch one hour?' (St. Mark xiv. verse 37).

St. Luke helps us to realise the suffering and the stress of the wrestling in prayer at Gethsemane by one thrilling verse, 'And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground' (St. Luke xxii. verse 44).

Suddenly, while He was speaking to His disciples, came the tramp of trained men and the flash of lights. It was a band of Roman soldiers from the garrison stationed in Antonia, with a body of Temple police (officers) sent by the chief priests and Pharisees. Judas was their guide, and with the cynicism of covetousness he went up to Jesus, and kissed Him, a kiss being the signal he had arranged. Jesus said to him very quietly, 'Friend, wherefore art thou come?' (St. Matthew xxvi. verse 50). Words calculated to give Judas an opportunity to repent by reminding him of the infamy of what he was doing, and of the miserable bribe for which he was incurring that infamy. Jesus, getting no answer, added to unmask the hypocrite, 'Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?' (St. Luke xxii. verse 48).

Then Jesus stood forth in calm and fearless majesty, desiring only to shield His disciples, and asked the armed men, 'Whom seek ye?' In the uncertain light they had evidently not recognised Jesus, for they answered, 'Jesus of Nazareth' (St. John xviii. verses 4, 5). 'Jesus saith unto them, I am he. . . . As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground' (St. John xviii. verses 5, 6). This involuntary prostration was the effect of the serene majesty of Him whom they had come to take. Perhaps they were also expecting some display of supernatural power. The fact, at any rate, showed plainly that Jesus gave Himself up of His own free will. Then He interceded for His disciples, 'I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way' (verse 8).

Only one of the Apostles resisted; Peter drew his sword and smote the high priest's servant, who was probably at the moment laying his hand on Jesus. 'Jesus, therefore, said to Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it? Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him. And led him away to Annas

first; for he was father in law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year' (St. John xviii. verses 11-13).

Annas, it may be explained, was the most remarkable figure in the Sadducean hierarchy: he and his five sons held the high priesthood in succession. He had been high priest from A.D. 7 to 14, and his son-in-law, Joseph Caiaphas, held the high priesthood twelve years, from A.D. 25 to 36. Through the members of his family this successful intriguer for many years ruled Jerusalem.

Here a word may be said about the plot which the Sadducees had devised, and the Pharisees had conspired with them to carry out. The plan was this. To arrest Jesus by night, when the Galileans in the city could know nothing of what was going on. To hurry Him before the Sanhedrin the same night, to bring Him condemned by them before Pilate at the early dawn, there to accuse Him of stirring up a revolution and putting Himself forward as the King of the Jews, and to get Him condemned and crucified forthwith. Once He was on the Cross, the Roman soldiers might be depended on to carry through the execution, in spite of any popular interference. This plot was literally carried out.

The arrest of Jesus took place about one o'clock in the morning on the Friday. No time was lost, and probably about two o'clock the preliminary private examination was made before Annas in the presence of Caiaphas, who together with Annas was waiting up all night to hurry through the preliminary examination. This was at the palace of the High Priest. Before this private examination, John had obtained admission for himself and Peter to the courtyard of the High Priest's palace.

'Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not' (St. John xviii. verse 17).

There was a fire in the courtyard, for it was long before sunrise and cold. At this fire the servants and officers were warming themselves, and Peter was with them for the same purpose.

Meanwhile the private examination of Jesus went on. Caiaphas asked Him about His disciples and His doctrine. 'Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said. And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so? Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil,

bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?' (St. John xviii. verses 20-23).

This closed the private examination before Annas; then followed the examination before Caiaphas, to whom Annas sent Jesus officially. This was in another part of the palace. When Jesus was brought into the Court at the close of the private examination, attention was drawn to the stranger, Peter.

St. John xviii. verses 25-27: 'And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also one of his disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not. One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him? Peter then denied again; and immediately the cock crew.'

Something in Peter's manner as his Lord was led by had revealed his interest and love, and led to the conjecture that he was a disciple. At three o'clock, an examination of Jesus took place before an irregular meeting of the Sanhedrin, and before five o'clock, at a hasty regular meeting of the same body, the formal sentence of the Sanhedrin was pronounced.

At the earlier informal meeting of the Sanhedrin at three o'clock in the morning, the chief priests and the elders and scribes, and all the Council, had sought witness against Jesus to put Him to death. John, and probably Peter, were present, and to their memory the account of this trial is due. Mark's account helps us to realise the scene. The High Priest and the Council sat on cushions on the floor in a semicircle, the High Priest in the middle. Jesus was forced to stand, bound with cords, though it was usual to allow a prisoner to be seated, and this Prisoner was very weary with the long night of trial. The Council brought forward many witnesses, whose witness agreed not together: the Prisoner maintained a dignified silence. Nothing worthy of a death sentence could be proved, and yet it was to pass this and nothing else, that the High Priest and the Council were there.

St. Mark xiv. verse 60-65: 'And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee? But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death. And some began to spit on

him, and to cover his face, and to buffet him, and to say unto him, Prophecy: and the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands.'

It seems almost incredible that men of the position of members of the Sanhedrin should descend to such cowardly brutalities as spitting in the face of a bound prisoner, and buffeting him, and mocking him. But the calm dignity of the Divine Prisoner, and above all, His great claim to the Messiaship which had enabled them to convict Him of blasphemy, had filled them with impotent rage. Rage is evident as the motive of the High Priest's action; it forced him to his feet when he ought to have carried out the examination seated, and probably many of the scribes and Pharisees had listened to Jesus' denunciation of them in the Temple little more than two days before, and were eager to avenge themselves on the helpless Prisoner, who so often had defeated them in argument and exposed their pretentious piety.

By the time they had done beating and mocking and reviling Jesus, the morning was fully come. Then at five o'clock, at the formal meeting of the whole Jewish Council to which we have referred, it was decided to take Jesus before the Roman governor; and the Sanhedrin, headed by the High Priest, conducted Him to Pilate's palace, the *Prætorium* (Hall of Judgment, A.V.). The sentence of death was determined on, but the Jews had no power to carry it out. The night trial was technically illegal, and the second meeting of the Sanhedrin had had to be held to confirm the decision already arrived at. Yet even the letter of the law was broken by a sentence and execution carried out on the day of trial. Probably it was not yet six o'clock when Jesus was brought before Pilate, for the word translated 'early' in St. John xviii. verse 28, is used for the fourth watch—three to six a.m. Pilate would have been prepared for the trial when, the day before, he granted a detachment of soldiers to help to make the arrest, and a Roman court could be held immediately after sunrise.

A full account of the private examination before Pilate is given by St. John alone, who was no doubt present at it. The Jews remained outside the *Prætorium*, lest they should be defiled at this Passover season, that is, by entering a house from which all leaven had not been removed.

The scenes in the trial of our Lord before Pilate took place partly outside the *Prætorium* and partly inside. The accusers of Jesus remained outside the *Prætorium*; Jesus, and the Roman soldiers who guarded Him, and St. John were within. First Pilate went out and asked them what charge they had against Jesus, and as their

indefinite reply that He was a malefactor seemed unsatisfactory, he told them to take Him and judge Him according to their law. Pilate's words forced the Jews to reveal their murderous purpose: 'It is not lawful for us to put any man to death' (St. John xviii. verse 31).

It would be difficult for us to explain this scrupulousness of Pilate if we did not know (from St. Matthew's account) of the message of Pilate's wife, warning him to have nothing to do with that righteous Man, for she had suffered many things in a dream because of Him. That message would make a deep impression on Pilate, since he must have known of the dream of Julius Cæsar's wife, and how it might have saved the life of her husband had attention been paid to it. Pilate then went into the palace, and questioned Jesus privately. The quiet dignity of the Prisoner's bearing and answers favourably affected the Roman. The Jews had evidently brought a charge of treason against Jesus, and Pilate's question, 'Art thou the King of the Jews?' (St. John xviii. verse 33), was connected with this charge. Jesus quickly made it plain to him that He was a spiritual, not an earthly, King.

'Every one that is of the truth, heareth my voice' (verse 37), that is to say, recognises My mandate as supreme, and is My subject.

As a result of the private examination Pilate went out and told the accusers, 'I find in him no fault at all' (verse 38). This did not suit the chief priests and the multitude; they had already accused Him of perverting the people and refusing to give tribute to Cæsar, a gross misrepresentation of His words on the tribute money. Now they urged that He stirred up all the people, beginning from Galilee unto this place. At the word Galilee, Pilate saw an opportunity of shirking his responsibility: he was anxious to acquit Jesus, but he felt the difficulty. He asked if Jesus was a Galilean, and when he learned that He was, he sent Him to King Herod, to whose jurisdiction He belonged and who was in Jerusalem at that time. Herod was pleased at Pilate's courtesy in treating him as king over the Galileans, even when in Jerusalem. He was the Herod who had murdered John the Baptist, to keep his promise to the daughter of Herodias. He had heard of the fame of Jesus and had long wished to see Him; he hoped also to see Him do a miracle. He asked many questions, but received no answer from the majestic Prisoner, though the chief priests and scribes, who had come with the Prisoner to Herod, vehemently accused Him. Jesus would work no miracle to satisfy the king's curiosity, so Herod and his soldiers mocked Him, arraying Him in royal robes and sending Him back to Pilate. Thus Pilate was still left with the responsibility,

though by his action he had made friends with Herod. Then Pilate thought of another loophole of escape. It was the custom of the Roman governor to release a criminal at the Passover, whomsoever the people wished. Pilate went out of the palace and offered, in accordance with his custom, to release Jesus to the people. 'Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews?' (St. Mark xv. verse 9); but, moved by the chief priests, who were active all along in their midst, they cried with one voice, 'Not this man, but Barabbas' (St. John xviii. verse 40).

Barabbas was a notorious criminal, who for insurrection and murder was in prison. Pilate weakly asked what was to be done with the King of the Jews, and then arose, apparently for the first time, the formidable cry, 'Crucify him! crucify him!' (St. John xix. verse 6). The chief priests no doubt raised the cry, but the multitude yelled it after them. Crucifixion had that horrible attraction which all public executions have for the rabble of a city, and stirred the lust of cruelty in an accentuated form, as being the most harrowing of all such spectacles. Pilate, after a few ineffectual efforts to make himself heard, crying, 'Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him' (St. Luke xxiii. verse 22), resorted to dumb show. He took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, 'I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it' (St. Matthew xxvii. verse 24). 'Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children' (verse 25).

The next step in our Lord's sufferings was the scourging, which St. John's narrative shows us was inflicted by Pilate as a punishment severe enough (he thought) to satisfy the Jews without crucifixion. Pilate had humoured the multitude by releasing Barabbas, and thought they might be satisfied with a lesser punishment than the death of Jesus. 'I will therefore chastise him, and let him go' (St. Luke xxiii. verse 22). Scourging was a savage torture; the scourge was loaded with metal and bone, to bruise and tear the flesh of the prisoner, who was naked to the waist and bound to a pillar during the punishment.

The place of our Lord's scourging may perhaps be identified. In a subterranean chamber, discovered by Warren on what Ferguson holds to be the site of Antonia, Pilate's Prætorium, 'stands a truncated column, no part of the construction, for the chamber is vaulted above the pillar, but just such a pillar as criminals would be tied to to be scourged. The chamber cannot be later than the time of Herod.'

After the scourging followed a shocking scene in the guard-room

of the Prætorium, which was probably suggested by the coarse jest of Herod and his soldiers, when they sent Jesus back, dressed up as a mock king. The whole body of soldiers had the Prisoner at their mercy in the guard-room, and they did with Him as they chose. They put on His head a crown of thorns, gathered probably from a thorn-bush in the garden of the Prætorium, they put a purple robe upon His bleeding shoulders; they put a reed, for a sceptre, in His right hand, and they knelt before Him and mocked Him, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing their knees, worshipped him' (St. Mark xv. verses 18, 19). The whole band took part in this callous sport, and each time they came to Him and said, 'Hail, King of the Jews,' they smote Him with their hands, a savage blow on the face taking the place of the kiss of homage; but Jesus bore it, as He bore all His sufferings, without resistance and without anger, with patient fortitude and gentle silence.

Pilate, who had come back into the palace to order the scourging, now must have found out what had been going on in the guard-room. This suggested to him a last appeal, by bringing out the Victim of the fierce sport of the soldiers, and showing Him to His enemies as at once too pitiable and too insignificant for more serious punishment.

'Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him. Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man! When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, Crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him' (St. John xix. verses 4-6).

Pilate's words 'Behold the man' (*Ecce Homo*) were the expression of half-contemptuous pity, and he hoped that the sight of such bitter humiliation would awaken the same feeling in the spectators. But the chief priests and their officers, the moment they saw Him, anticipated any such outburst of pity with the loud cry, 'Crucify! crucify!' Nothing short of crucifixion, the death of a slave, would satisfy them. Pilate, disappointed and angry, told them to crucify Him themselves, which of course they had no power to do. The Jews met Pilate's challenge by stating their real reason for demanding the Prisoner's death.

St. John xix. verse 7: 'The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.'

Pilate had already recognised something mysterious and greater than man in Jesus, and what the Jews asserted deepened the doubts which our Lord's presence had inspired.

'When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid; and went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer. Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin' (St. John xix. verses 8-11).

The calm dignity of the Prisoner's answer confirmed Pilate's fears, and he now actively sought to release Him. Thereupon the leaders of the Jews dropped the religious accusation and adopted a political one. They raised a loud simultaneous cry, 'If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar' (verse 12). This amounted to the threat that they would accuse Pilate of disloyalty to the Emperor, if he did not crucify Jesus. This appeal to Pilate's fears of what a morose and suspicious tyrant like the Emperor Tiberius might do, was at once successful: he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat, and pointing to Jesus, said bitterly to the Jews, 'Behold your King!' (verse 14). But the priests had carried the people with them, and Pilate's words were received with the cry, 'Away with him, away with him, crucify him!' (verse 15). Pilate uttered a last reproach, 'Shall I crucify your King?' (verse 15). The chief priests, the official organs of the Divine Government, replied in words that were the formal abdication of the Messianic King in favour of the foreign Emperor, 'We have no king but Cæsar' (verse 15). Pilate pronounced no sentence; the chief priests were simply allowed to have their own way. They were the real executioners and practically carried out the foreign law, by the hands of the Roman soldiers. It was probably about six or half-past six in the morning when Pilate delivered up Jesus to be crucified.

St. John xix. verse 14: 'And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour.'

The soldiers, after they had taken Jesus away, amused themselves at His expense by a second mockery of the condemned King.

St. Mark xv. verses 20, 21: 'And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him. And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross.'

St. John's account is that He went forth (that is, started) bearing the cross for Himself, but St. Mark's account tells us that after He had gone some distance, He sank from weakness beneath the burden, and therefore it was transferred to Simon of Cyrene, a passer-by.

There was evidently a considerable interval in which the second mockery by the soldiers took place, between six or half-past six, when He was delivered up to be crucified, and nine o'clock (the third hour) the time of the actual crucifixion according to St. Mark, 'And it was the third hour, and they crucified him' (St. Mark xv. verse 25).

As the sad procession made its way from the Prætorium to Golgotha (Calvary, 'the skull'), a spot outside the city where the crucifixion was to be carried out, an incident occurred which shows how our Lord was thinking of and sorrowing for others, and not for Himself: the incident is recorded in St. Luke's Gospel in chapter xxiii. verses 27-29:

'And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck.'

Jesus, about to die an agonising death Himself, mourned, not for Himself, but for the destruction that awaited Jerusalem and its inhabitants at the hands of the Romans, the very people whom the Jews were compelling to crucify their true Messiah on a charge of sedition.

The crowd that accompanied the Roman guard seems to have included not only the rabble of the city, eager for the spectacle of a crucifixion, but the chief priests and other leaders of the people, who had clamoured for a death sentence and had intimidated Pilate into submission.

When the soldiers and their prisoners reached Golgotha, the usual preparations were made to crucify Jesus and the two malefactors who were to share His fate. A stupefying draught, 'wine mingled with myrrh' (St. Mark xv. verses 23), was refused by Jesus, who was resolved to suffer and die with all His powers intact. Shrieks and groans and curses probably came from the two robbers, the usual accompaniment of the cruel pain as the nails were driven through hands and feet, but from Jesus, as the nails were driven in, came what is known as the first word from the Cross, a

prayer of forgiving love: 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do' (St. Luke xxiii. verse 34).

This utterance of unselfish compassion for sinners and calm courage under keen suffering fitly introduces that great Revelation of Incarnate Love which is offered to our gaze in the records of the Crucifixion.

The Cross on which Christ hung was placed between the two crosses on which were crucified the two robbers. The title (*titulus*) was a piece of wood covered with white gypsum, on which the sufferer's offence was written in letters of black; the title was nailed to the upright post of wood, the cross proper, which reached not more than seven and a half to nine feet above the ground in which it was planted. The cross-bar was generally carried by the condemned man to the place of execution. During crucifixion the victim was quite close to the ground, within easy sight and hearing of all that went on around him.

St. John xix. verses 19-22: 'And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS. This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin. Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am the King of the Jews. Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.'

Pilate wrote the inscription himself, and had it placed on the Cross as some slight revenge on the chief priests, who had forced him to condemn an innocent man. He wrote the inscription in three languages, in order that all the visitors to the feast might be able to read it. The chief priests felt the imputation on themselves, and asked him to change the inscription. Pilate, pleased at having hurt those who had hurt him, and no longer in danger of denunciation to Tiberius, curtly refused their request, and the form of his answer is characteristically Roman.

A word may here be said about Pontius Pilate. He was the Roman Governor, or rather Procurator of Judæa, the territory from which Archelaus was deposed, A.D. 6, which included Judæa, Samaria, and Idumæa. His official residence was Herod's palace in Cæsarea, but he usually went up to Jerusalem for the feast. He was appointed in the twelfth year of Tiberius, and continued in office ten years, that is to say, he came into office when John the Baptist appeared, remained in office through our Lord's ministry, and saw the establishment of the Christian Church in Judæa. The character of Pilate, as described in the Gospels, fierce and haughty,

yet weak and vacillating, is confirmed by what we know of him from other sources; so is the hearty dislike which existed between him and the Jews. We learn from Josephus that Pilate's rule was brought to an end by his savage attempt to suppress, as seditious, an innocent movement of the Samaritans. Pilate attacked them and killed many; therefore the Samaritans appealed to the Legate in Syria, Vitellius, who ordered Pilate to answer at Rome before the Emperor the complaints against him. Before Pilate reached Rome, Tiberius was dead, and Pilate disappears from history, though his name comes up frequently in fanciful traditions and legends.

That Pilate knew something of the mighty works of Jesus and His holy life, before He was brought to the Prætorium, seems probable from the readiness with which he accepted the Prisoner's explanation of the entirely unworldly nature of His Kingdom. His wife's dream, and the message she sent, shows that she possessed such knowledge, and was fully convinced that Jesus was a righteous man. The end of the Roman who judged our Lord is unknown, but the end of the Jew who betrayed Him is recorded by St. Matthew in chapter xxvii. verses 3-8:

'Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, what is that to us? see thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself. And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. And they took counsel, and brought with them the potter's field to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day.'

The pangs of conscience which drove the wretched man to suicide, and the genuineness of his grief, have suggested to some students that Judas expected that by some exercise of the supernatural power, which he knew his Master possessed, He would defeat the attempt to arrest Him. The gentleness of our Lord's remonstrances with Judas points to the fact that He was ready to forgive, and only wanted Judas to awaken to the heinousness of his sin and ask for forgiveness. At the present day there is still shown to visitors to Jerusalem a piece of waste ground, barren and desolate, shunned by every passer-by and as well known as 'The Field of Blood' to-day as when the Gospel was first written.

To return to the Crucifixion. As a crucified man was not likely

to die for many hours, the soldiers set to work to divide the garments they had stripped from Jesus, and each of the quaternion took a part, but the seamless coat they cast lots for in order to avoid spoiling it by tearing it in four pieces. When they had done this they sat down and watched Him there. The attitude of the soldiers was the not unnatural one of professional callousness: but there were other bystanders whose attitude was far more horrible, far more trying to the Sufferer. These were the chief priests and the scribes and elders, and their supporters, who had come out from Jerusalem to gloat over the sufferings of the hated Prophet of Nazareth. To them the revenge seemed satisfying and sweet, and they enjoyed it to the full. Jesus could hear every word thy said, and they made their words like knives to cut Him to the quick.

'And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others, himself he cannot save. If he be King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God' (St. Matthew xxvii. verses 39-43).

Even His fellow-sufferers joined in the chorus of ridicule and abuse: the soldiers too were moved to imitate the other mockers.

'And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar, and saying, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself' (St. Luke xxiii. verses 36, 37).

The mocking and ribaldry were borne with the same gentle patience as His other sufferings, and this wonderful gentleness and sweetness produced its effect.

'And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou are in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise' (St. Luke xxiii. verses 39-43).

This is the second word from the Cross, a saying of comfort, not only to the penitent thief, but also to all generations since. The words 'To day shalt thou be with me in paradise' are a declaration that the believer's soul at death passes into the presence of His

Saviour, and that the intermediate state includes for the believer the joyful experience of entering into the joy of his Lord. To this agree the words of the risen Lord to St. John, preserved in Revelation i. verse 18: 'I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of the unseen world and of death.' That St. Paul held this view is evident, for he speaks of death as 'to depart and to be with Christ' (Philippians i. verse 23).

But our Lord was not left to suffer the agony of the Cross without the blessed consciousness of the presence of human love: His Mother and the faithful disciple whom He loved were there. St. John alone had been true to his Lord before the High Priest and before Pilate, and now on the Cross: and to his Gospel we owe the knowledge of much of what took place.

'Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home' (St. John xix. verses 25-27).

Jesus had a twofold purpose in these words to His mother, and to his bosom friend, St. John, which are known as the third saying or word from the Cross. His ultimate purpose, no doubt, was to provide for the welfare and happiness of His mother by giving her a new son, whose happiness was also enhanced by taking his Lord's mother for his own. His immediate purpose was that John should remove His mother from the terrible spectacle of the Crucifixion during the remaining hours of His extreme mental suffering, as John appears to have done. If, as seems probable, the brethren of Jesus were sons of Joseph by a former marriage, and if John was the son of the sister of the Lord's mother, who is identified by St. Matthew with Salome, then John was nearest to the Blessed Virgin by blood relationship, and the difficulty of his being chosen in preference to the brethren of the Lord disappears.

And now the ministry of Jesus to others was ended, and our attention is concentrated on the Lord Himself. A great darkness came on, which lasted for three hours.

'And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst' (St. Luke xxiii. verses 44, 45).

It came on at the sixth hour, that is twelve o'clock. This deep darkness at noonday may be regarded as Nature's way of sympa-

thising with Nature's Lord. This was the most awful period of suffering, and it was to save His mother the sight of this, that He had sent her away with St. John. The only measure of that awful suffering He endured while the weight of the world's sins pressed upon Him is the awe-inspiring cry which broke from Him, under the awful sense of utter abandonment and isolation: 'ELOI, ELOI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?' which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' (St. Mark xv. verse 34). Or to translate the original Aramaic of the cry more literally, 'Why didst thou forsake me?' This utterance of supreme anguish is the fourth word from the Cross, and belongs to the period of darkness towards its close.

The next word came when the darkness was over, 'I thirst,' the fifth word from the Cross.

'After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar; and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth' (St. John xix. verses 28, 29).

This utterance of physical suffering was in itself an expression of relief from the greater suffering of spirit which was now over. Apparently one of the soldiers, touched with compassion, offered this slight refreshment which the Lord accepted as the offering of reverent kindness from one whom His bearing upon the Cross may have half won.

The last suffering for sin had been endured: the life-work was done: Jesus was ready to die.

'When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost' (St. John xix. verse 30).

This cry of triumph, 'It is finished,' is a single word in the original. This is the sixth word from the Cross, but is the last recorded by St. John. St. Luke gives the seventh word, which our Lord spoke in dying: 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit' (St. Luke xxiii. verse 46); and St. Matthew adds: 'And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent' (St. Matthew xxvii. verse 51).

And so the only Perfect Life on earth was finished, and the Perfect Victory won. Of His own free choice our Lord gave up His Life, as He had said: 'I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again' (St. John x. verse 18).

The Jews thought it was finished in a very different sense: they

thought they had finally got rid of this Prophet of Nazareth. They had carried through successfully their daring conspiracy of getting Him tried, condemned, and executed the same day, and now they had only to make His death certain, and get His Body buried away out of sight.

'The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day), besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe' (St. John xix. verses 31-35).

The blood and water which flowed from the pierced side was, perhaps, a sign of life in death, a sign of the beginning of the change completed in the Resurrection. Our Lord in dying provided for the supply of the virtue of His human life, of which blood was the symbol, and also for the outpouring of His spiritual life, of which water was the symbol.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE GOSPELS (THE BURIAL—THE RESURRECTION—THE APPEARANCES OF THE FIRST EASTER DAY—THE APPEARANCES OF THE FORTY DAYS—THE ASCENSION).

THE Crucifixion, the narrative of which we have followed through the four Gospels, was now over, and the crucified 'King of the Jews' hung dead between the crucified thieves. Already the serene majesty of His bearing upon the Cross had produced lasting effects on some of the onlookers. The centurion in command of the soldiers who carried out the execution, was so impressed by all he saw that the involuntary confession burst from his lips, 'Truly this was the Son of God' (St. Matthew xxvii. verse 54). Two of His secret disciples, both men of high position and wealth, who had not had the courage openly to confess their discipleship in His lifetime, were moved by His death fearlessly to avow their discipleship and their devotion to their master's memory. Joseph of Arimathea went boldly to Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus. Nicodemus, who had formerly come to Jesus by night, came now in broad daylight to assist at His burial, bringing a rich man's costly offering, a compound of the gum of the myrrh tree and of the fragrant powder of aloë-wood, of no less than one hundred pounds weight, in which to encase the whole body, in the Jewish—as distinguished from the Egyptian—method of embalming. All they could do now was to honour the sacred Body of their Master, and that they did. Theirs was a love quickened into intensity by the consciousness of the supreme worth of their Master and the hopeless sorrow of their irreparable loss.

'And . . . Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus. And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus at night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand' (St. John xix. verses 38-42).

If Jesus had been simply a claimant to the Messiaship whose claim had ended in defeat and death, our narrative might close here, or rather, there would have been no narrative at all, for there would have been no Christian Church and no New Testament, the handiwork of that Church. Jesus, in establishing the Kingdom of God, had founded His Church, but the members of His Kingdom, at the time of His death, had no intelligent understanding of the nature of the Kingdom, nor of the requirements of membership. The old materialistic conception of the Kingdom still held sway in their minds. As lately as the Thursday night at the Last Supper when our Lord instituted the Great Sacrament, there had been a contention among them which should be accounted greatest. Even the most spiritual of them as yet knew as little what manner of spirit they were of as when some time before this the Sons of Thunder wished to call down fire from heaven upon the inhospitable Samaritan villagers. As a matter of fact the condition of mind in the disciples of Jesus after their Lord's death was pitiable in the extreme. They had trusted that He was the Messiah sent by God, that 'it was he who should redeem Israel' (St. Luke xxiv. verse 21); but the most passionate Messianic hopes could not survive those crushing experiences. Him whom they expected to found the Kingdom of God for Israel and to reign over it gloriously, they had seen taken and tried like a common malefactor. They had seen Him in the high priest's palace, condemned for blasphemy by 'the assembly of the elders of the people', spat upon, buffeted, smitten with the palms of their hands, by the ecclesiastical heads of the nation. They had seen Him, after the scourging and mockery and ill-usage of the Roman soldiers, bleeding and exhausted, staggering under the weight of His Cross. They had seen Him hanging, nailed on His Cross, between the crucified thieves, challenged by His taunting enemies to come down from the Cross if He were the Christ, and apparently unable to do so. They had seen Him die at last and His Body laid in the tomb where all their high hopes were buried with Him. It was plain to them He must have made a mistake. Holy and good and mighty miracle-worker though He was, He could not have been the Christ, the Son of the living God; for after all, He was dead and His kingdom had perished with its King.

When Joseph of Arimathæa after the burial 'rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed' (St. Matthew xxvii. verse 60), he left Mary Magdalene there and the other Mary sitting over against the sepulchre. The two broken-hearted women, sitting desolate in view of the tomb, fairly represent the despair of the

whole body of disciples. The burial of the Master was the burial of their last hope, and soon the great stone was sealed fast, and the chief priests' guard made the sepulchre sure. How the Apostles and the other disciples passed that terrible Sabbath-day of utter darkness and disillusionment, who shall say? Some of the women found comfort in the very womanly planning of a last service to Him they loved; and the only service they could think of was to complete the honour done to all that remained of Him, His dead Body, by anointing it with spices to repel the approaches of decay.

Late on the Sabbath-day two of them came to view the sepulchre, eager to begin their work of reverence and love, one of whom, apparently the leader in this good work, was Mary Magdalene, the last at the tomb after the burial on Friday, the first at the tomb on Saturday afternoon. The spices were not yet bought and could not be bought till the Sabbath-day was over, at six o'clock on Saturday evening.

'And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him' (St. Mark xvi. verse 1).

Then very early on the Sunday morning, Mary Magdalene, still the leader, with Mary the mother of James, and Salome, and other women, set out for the sepulchre in the thick darkness, not yet thinning into twilight. Mary Magdalene hurried on before the others and arrived while it was yet dark at the sepulchre. She saw the great stone had been removed, and hurried away at once to tell Peter and John. We now give St. Mark's account of the experiences of the other women, reserving St. John's account of Mary Magdalene's experiences till later.

'And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great. And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. And he said unto them, Be not affrighted: ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you. And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they anything to any man; for they were afraid' (St. Mark xvi. verses 2-8).

One might have imagined the women would have been talking

about their dead Master, but the simple record tells of a womanly concentration of attention on the details of the task in hand, and one feels that this absorption in the practical difficulty of moving the stone is perfectly true to nature. To these same women a little later (after the appearance to Mary Magdalene) an appearance of the Lord was granted, recorded by St. Matthew alone.

‘And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me’ (St. Matthew xxviii. verese 9, 10).

Now let us turn to St. John’s account of what happened to Mary Magdalene after she arrived at the tomb:

‘The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre. Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him. Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following Him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, and the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed. For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead. Then the disciples went away again unto their own home. But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, and seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but

go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; to my God, and your God. Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her' (St. John xx. verses 1-18).

The record about 'that other disciple' in the eighth verse, that 'he saw and believed,' is St. John's record about himself. The meaning of 'believed' is a little difficult, but probably the spiritual insight of the beloved disciple read the threefold sign, of the stone removed, the tomb empty, the grave-clothes laid out and the napkin wrapped together by itself, and leaped to the right conclusion, that the Lord was somehow alive. It was Mary's love for her Master that kept her by the tomb after the two Apostles had gone. She was too much absorbed in her own thoughts to take notice of the vision of the angels. All she hoped to discover now was the dead Body of her Master, which she supposed had been taken away. So dear still to her was that Master whose marvellous spiritual influence had awakened her higher self and raised her above the power of sin, that she felt that even the place where His dead Body had lain was nearer and dearer to her than any other. Sometimes by a kind of unconscious sympathy of souls, one half perceives the presence of a loved person without seeing him or even hearing his approach. So it may have been with Mary on this occasion.

This was the Lord's first appearance to any one after His Resurrection, and was granted to simple love; and the lesson is that love is the thing the Lord most prizes,—love, the motive-power of devoted service.

The mystery of the glorified body is touched upon in our Lord's message to His disciples: 'I ascend' (or rather, 'I am ascending'), He said. That is, the Ascension had begun although forty days had still to pass and many appearances had to take place before it was completed. Mary Magdalene hastened with the good news to the disciples, but they believed her not.

'And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept. And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not' (St. Mark xvi. verses 10, 11).

A very fully reported appearance of this first day recorded by St. Luke alone is that to two disciples, one of whom may very well have been Luke himself, at about four o'clock in the afternoon, on the road to Emmaus. Certainly the account comes, and comes, it seems, immediately, from one of the two, so vivid is the narrative and so manifest the marks of the eye-witness.

Mary had not recognised the risen Lord till He made Himself known, and so it was with these two disciples.

‘And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him. And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad? And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre; and when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not. Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further. But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?’ (St. Luke xxiv. verses 13-32).

After this, there was an appearance to Peter, of which we have no account, what passed between the Risen Lord and the disciple who had denied Him being too sacred for the public ear. The two to whom the Risen Lord had revealed Himself at Emmaus hurried

back with the news, and found the Apostles gathered together, and the other disciples with them, and were greeted with the good news that the Lord had appeared to Simon Peter. The two disciples from Emmaus told the others their wonderful experiences, and how the Lord had made Himself known in the Breaking of the Bread. The 'Breaking of the Bread,' it may be observed, is the expression used to signify the Lord's Supper, and the way in which our Lord blessed and broke bread at Emmaus, and so made Himself known, suggests that the breaking of bread at Emmaus was a sacramental meal.

The fifth appearance, the last on the Day of Resurrection, was that which took place in the Upper Room at Jerusalem, the sacred last meeting-place of the disciples and their Lord. St. John and St. Luke both give accounts of this appearance. St. John, of course, as one who was present, is the higher authority, though St. Luke's account records important details omitted by St. John, who purposely avoided the words and deeds already recorded by another.

'Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye (rather, 'take ye') the Holy Ghost: whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained' (St. John xx. verses 19-23).

The point peculiar to St. John's account of this appearance to the disciples as a society (the Ten and others with them) is the gift of the Holy Ghost, and its application in giving or withholding the power of the new life. This gift of absolution was to the whole Church. It is the commission of the whole Christian society. The gift of remission of sins comes from Christ, and it is the Church's business to apply it to all. He who accepts the Gospel receives with it remission of sins, and he who rejects it, rejects that remission. To set man free from sin and to declare his forgiveness is the duty of the Church in general; and of the clergy as the Church's representatives in particular. St. Luke's account adds some vivid details, particularly the dismay with which the disciples first saw what they thought was a ghost, and the way in which the Lord took away their fear.

'And as thy thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them,

and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them' (St. Luke xxiv. verses 36-43).

The next appearance took place a week after, and is recorded only by St. John.

'But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed' (St. John xx. verses 24-29).

The words in which our Lord offered Thomas the proofs he had required in the very language in which he had uttered his doubt convinced him of His omnipresence and His Divinity, and Thomas thereupon uttered the highest confession of that Divinity hitherto recorded, 'My Lord and my God.' This must have pleased our Lord, who always desired His disciples to discover for themselves the facts about His Person, His Messiahship, and His Divinity.

St. John gives the account of another appearance, the seventh, peculiar to his Gospel, in the twenty-first chapter, which is a sort of appendix to the Gospel; an appendix or epilogue rendered necessary by the circulation of a saying of the Lord as to St. John: 'Then went this saying abroad among the bretheren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee' (St. John xxi. verse 23).

The disciples had by this time returned to their earthly work in Galilee as fishermen on the lake, though before the Ascension they

came again to Jerusalem. All teaching given by the Risen Lord is of such supreme importance that His revelation to Peter of what constitutes the great qualification for His service which is the measure of true discipleship must be given in full.

'After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise shewed he himself. There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples. Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing. But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No. And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea. And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes. As soon as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught. Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken. Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise. This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead. So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou was young, thou girdedst thy-

self, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me. Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me' (St. John xxi. verse 1-22).

In this appearance the Lord reveals Himself as present to men, engaged in the work of life. He does not awaken recognition in the eyes of His disciples, either by His appearance, or by His voice. He is recognised only in the results that follow obedience. Our Lord in His risen Body was not easily recognised: Mary Magdalene did not know Him till He called her by her name. The disciples, on the road to Emmaus, listened long to His expositions of the Scriptures without realising who it was, till He made Himself known in the Breaking of the Bread. We can, indeed, trace a growing difficulty of recognition, when we remember that the seven disciples at the lake had all of them probably seen Him more than once, and were therefore conscious that He might appear at any moment. The explanation seems to be that He was passing gradually further and further from the conditions of the earthly life to the conditions of the heavenly. His message to His brethren, through Mary Magdalene, on the morning of the Resurrection, declared this: 'I am ascending to my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God' (St. John. xx. verse 17). That is to say, the change, of which the visible Ascension was the symbol, had begun on the first of the great forty days, and was to go on till their close.

The eighth appearance also took place in Galilee. It differed from the other appearances in this—that the other appearances were not expected, but this was by appointment. There was an obvious reason for this. All the disciples were to be given an opportunity of attending. The purpose of our Lord, as revealed by His action, was to give to His Church the great commission to evangelise the whole world. As regards the 'some' who 'doubted,' it is plain they could not have been of the eleven, who had seen the Lord repeatedly.

'Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and

in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen' (St. Matthew xxviii. verses 16-20).

This appearance is probably to be identified with one recorded in the earliest mention in the New Testament of the appearances of the Risen Lord, which is to be found in 1 Corinthians xv. verse 6: 'After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some have fallen asleep.'

It is clear that an appearance to so large a number of persons as five hundred may reasonably be identified with the one appearance recorded to have been by appointment; the one, moreover, at which the missionary character of the Christian Church was given, and the Promise of a Real Presence with the Church even to the end of the world. As the Church at Jerusalem numbered only one hundred and twenty persons, the five hundred must have included a large number of Galileans; and probably the appointment for the appearance took place in Galilee, because the great majority of the disciples were Galileans. The Revised Version brings out the meaning of some of our Lord's words much more clearly, and may therefore be added here: 'Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.' Here we have in the missionary charter of the Church the duty and the formula of baptism, containing the doctrine of the Trinity in its plainest shape. Observe the singular 'name,' not names, and that it is 'into,' not in. This, if we accept the identification, is the eighth appearance.

The ninth appearance is merely mentioned by St. Paul, and comes after the appearance to the five hundred: 'After that, he was seen of James; then of all the Apostles' (1 Corinthians xv. verse 7).

The appearance to James is followed in this passage by the appearance to all the Apostles, which we may identify with the appearance which immediately preceded our Lord's Ascension, and closed the appearances of the Great Forty Days. It is indeed very probable there were more appearances than are recorded; and this is, at least, suggested by St. John's words: 'And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book' (St. John xx. verse 30). These signs were done apparently after the Resurrection.

Be that as it may, the last recorded appearance of the forty days ended in the Ascension. After the Lord had fully confirmed

the Apostles' faith in the Resurrection by many appearances and much teaching, after He had taught them their duty as a society, and their duty as individuals, and so prepared them for the fulfilment of the promise of the Holy Spirit, He appeared to them and conversed with them for the last time. In His other appearances, attention is drawn to the way He came. In this last appearance, attention is concentrated on the way He departed; and that departure is what we call the Ascension. This last appearance and the final departure took place quite close to Jerusalem. The spot generally assigned to the Ascension is a summit of the range called the Mount of Olives, about three-quarters of a mile from the site of the Temple. Here our Lord talked with His disciples at the end of the forty days. During that period He had appeared to them repeatedly and proved to them that His Presence when invisible was as real as when they saw Him (*e.g.*, His words to Thomas); He had prepared their minds for the Ascension by such utterances as the words spoken to Mary Magdalene: 'Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended' (St. John xx. verse 17), which plainly implied that when He had entered on the life, to which the Ascension was the doorway, they would be really, because spiritually, closer to Him and more in touch with Him than ever. Indeed, the preparation had begun at a much earlier date, during His ministry on earth, in such utterances as we find in St. John vi. verse 62: 'What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? And in St. John iii. verse 13: 'And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.'

From the first the Incarnation carried with it the necessity, alike of the Passion and of the Resurrection and of the Ascension: the elevation on the cross was the direct way to the elevation on the right hand of God, of which the visible Ascension was the symbol.

The Ascension is very briefly described in the two Gospels that record it, in St. Luke's and in St. Mark's; but a fuller description is given in the Acts of the Apostles, which we shall deal with in its place in the next chapter. St. Luke's account in the Gospel is found in chapter xxiv. verses 50-53:

'And he led them out as far as Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.'

The account is short, but marvellously pregnant and impressive. The last look the disciples had of the Lord was in the attitude of

blessing. He left them in order to bless them, as He had said. 'Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you' (St. John xvi. verse 7).

While He blessed them He was carried up into heaven, and the immediate effect was that they worshipped Him as God.

The result of the forty days' revelation was seen in the way the disciples accepted the change from the visible manifestation to an invisible spiritual presence. Joyful and thankful worship was the immediate response of the Christian community to the enthronement of their King at God's right hand by His Ascension.

The other account in the Gospels is found in St. Mark xvi. verses 19, 20: 'So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.'

These verses, from the supplement of St. Mark's Gospel, record a further experience that came to the disciples after the Ascension. They went forth and preached the Gospel everywhere, as the Risen Lord had commanded when He appeared to them on the mountain in Galilee, and found that the Ascended Lord was with them, a real Presence which showed itself in the wonderful results that attended their preaching, and in the joy and love that were the distinguishing characteristics of the struggling and persecuted Church, which not only called itself, but felt itself His Body, because it felt the tide of the New Life, His Life, pulse through its veins.

The Ascension is the last event recorded in the Gospels, and the first event recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. It is the transition from one dispensation to another; it is the gateway by which Christ went to the Father, in order that in the Spirit He might be with His Church always, even to the end of the world. His local and temporal presence was changed to a spiritual and universal Presence; and this change in order to interpret it to the disciples' sense-bound understanding was represented sacramentally in the visible elevation of the glorified humanity of the Lord, in His visible Ascent heavenward till 'a cloud received him' out of their sight' (Acts i. verse 9).

CHAPTER XXX.

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES (THE ASCENSION—PENTECOST—THE
SANHEDRIN—STEPHEN—PHILIP—THE CONVERSION OF SAUL—
CORNELIUS—PAUL AND BARNABAS—THE FIRST MISSIONARY
JOURNEY—COUNCIL AT JERUSALEM—SECOND MISSIONARY JOUR-
NEY.

WE come now to the Acts of the Apostles, which contains the history of the building of the Christian Church, the laying of the foundations of which we have read about in the Gospels. The Apostles whose acts are the subject of the book, are for the main part of the narrative St. Peter and St. Paul. About St. John and St. James we learn very little. We gain from the Acts of the Apostles most valuable knowledge of the growth of the Christian Church, from its small beginnings at Jerusalem after the Ascension, to its expansion all over the Roman world, in Palestine, Syria, Asia Minor, Macedonia, Greece, and Italy; we learn, moreover, something of the nature of the Apostles' teaching from the many and interesting reports of their sermons and addresses. The Acts of the Apostles was written by St. Luke, the author of the Gospel that bears his name. The purpose of his Gospel was to describe accurately, from trustworthy reports and documents, the life and teaching of the Lord Jesus. The purpose of his book of the Acts of the Apostles was to describe, from the best sources he could command, the growth of the Christian Church in the Apostles' days.

St. Luke had the gifts of an historian, and the historian's concern for accuracy. His sources of information, for the main body of his work, were excellent. From chapter xx. onwards, to the end of the book, he was an eye-witness of what he describes, as also in chapter xvi. verses 10-40. Parts of the first five chapters were apparently based on written documents, and the same may be true of some later narratives, such as those of St. Peter's labours (ix. verse 32 to xi. verse 18). For the account of St. Paul's Conversion, as for the account of the journeys during which he was not with St. Paul, he would have the best possible information from St. Paul himself. The story of St. Stephen, chapters vi. and vii., was probably, if we may judge from the full report of St. Stephen's speech, based on a written document, which he obtained at Jerusalem, when he was there with St. Paul, and this would be verified by St. Paul

himself, who had been present at St. Stephen's martyrdom. The history of Philip's work in chapter viii. may well have been obtained from Philip himself during the visit of St. Luke in Paul's company to Philip's house in Cæsarea mentioned in Acts xxi. verse 8. It may be added that St. Luke's statements and descriptions, where they can be tested, are found remarkably accurate; for example, the story of St. Paul's labours is confirmed by St. Paul's Epistles, and the description of the place of St. Paul's shipwreck is given with such careful exactitude, that it has been perfectly identified.

If we had not in the Acts of the Apostles the words as well as the deeds of the Apostles, the book would seriously lose in value. Before His Ascension the Lord commissioned His Apostles to be His witnesses, and make disciples of all nations, even unto the uttermost parts of the earth. The sermons and speeches of the Apostles recorded in the Acts are part of this witness-bearing. The question naturally arises, 'How were the sermons and speeches obtained?' Probably notes were carefully taken down by disciples who were present. Some sort of shorthand existed in those days. Galen, in the second century, tells us that the medical students took down his lectures which they attended. Moreover, St. Luke may have submitted his versions of the speeches to the Apostles themselves, and this it is more than probable he did in the case of St. Paul; and even in the case of St. Peter's speeches the same course may have been taken, for St. Luke may have met him at Jerusalem, and even at Rome, where, says Irenæus, St. Peter and St. Paul worked together.

We noticed in our last chapter that the Ascension was the last event recorded in the Gospel, and the first event recorded in the Acts. This event occupies a more prominent position in the Acts than in the Gospels. Our Lord's enthronement at the right hand of God, symbolised by the visible manifestation of the Ascension, was the fitting climax to the other manifestations of His Glory, which followed the Resurrection. The beginnings of that universal reign over man's heart and life which He entered on by that enthronement, are related in the Acts of the Apostles.

The long account of the Ascension with which the Acts begins must now be considered. After briefly recording the order of the Risen Lord to His Apostles to wait at Jerusalem for the promise of the Father, the baptism with the Holy Ghost, St. Luke gives the following report of the Ascension, a report supplementary to that which he gives in his Gospel.

'When they therefore were come together, they asked of him saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven' (Acts i. verses 6-11).

The Lord's answer to the Apostles' question turns their thoughts from unprofitable speculation on things too deep for them to practical work. It is interesting to note that the order He fixed (Jerusalem, all Judæa, and Samaria) was the exact missionary order in which the expansion of the Church was actually carried out. We observe in this account that the Lord on longer vanished from the disciples' eyes, as He had vanished at Emmaus. He departed gradually, rising into the sky, going in the clouds of heaven, with power and glory that were the outward and visible signs of His elevation to a heavenly kingship. The effects of the Ascension on the Apostles we have already seen in St. Luke's and St. Mark's Gospels. Probably St. Luke's account (certainly St. Mark's) includes the experiences of the Church long after Pentecost, as the results of the Ascension. This view is quite legitimate, for the Ascension is vitally connected (as a cause is with its consequence) with the outpouring of the Spirit, ten days after, at Pentecost. When the Apostles returned from Olivet they went up into the Upper Room, which was their placet of meeting, both before and after the Ascension, and there they spent their time in prayer. There were about a hundred and twenty of them, and among them were our Lord's Mother and other women, and His brethren. The Church was already constituted on the first Easter evening, when the Lord breathed on the disciples, and made them partakers of His own risen life, the one body of Christ on earth. But the need of the Church, as a body, of further gifts of the Spirit at Pentecost was shown by the only action of that body in the interval which is recorded by St. Luke.

They had to select an Apostle in the room of Judas, one qualified to be ordained to be a witness with them of the Resurrection, and they made the selection by casting lots, a crude method to which they never resorted again, after Pentecost. At last the ten days

of waiting were over, and Pentecost, the fiftieth day after the Passover, the feast of harvest, was come.

'And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance' (Acts ii. verses 1-4).

It was the early dawn (as the original words signify) and they were all together in one place. The identification of this place, mentioned in verse 1, with the Upper Room is of course possible, and on the surface seems probable; but even the courtyard of a house at Jerusalem could hardly have contained the tenth part of the huge crowd that listened to St. Peter's sermon (three thousand of these were baptized) whereas if we take it that the Temple was the scene of the gift of the Holy Spirit, all becomes intelligible.

We know that at this festival the priests opened the gates of the Temple at midnight, and crowds of worshippers entered and waited in the Temple courts. This is where the Apostles, like all religious Jews, would be. The first verse of the second chapter tells us: they were all with one accord in one place,' almost St. Paul's phrase for meeting to worship, while the word 'house' in the next verse, is the term used by the Septuagint and Josephus, for the Temple chambers. If one takes this view, the presence of crowds of Jews of the Dispersion, and the immediate collection of a great multitude on hearing the sound as of a rushing mighty wind, are easily understood. The crowds of worshippers who thronged the Temple courts would be close to the Temple chamber where the Apostles were, and would assemble to it at once, and St. Peter would come out and 'lift up' his voice to reach the multitude which filled the spacious Temple court.

Speaking with tongues is best understood by examining what St. Paul says to the Corinthians on the subject (1 Corinthians xiv.). It seems to have been the emotional utterance of persons in a state of religious ecstasy. The manifestation was striking, but St. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, ranked it by no means as one of the highest gifts. Whatever the speaking with tongues may have been, exalted emotion and disinterested enthusiasm are mighty powers in the religious life, and these powers from this time distinguished the Apostolic Church and were recognised as a gift of the Spirit. St. Peter took the opportunity offered by the immense crowd, and stood up with the rest of the Apostles, and acted as their spokesman.

He chose the text of his sermon (the first sermon preached in the Christian Church) from Joel ii. verse 28, a great prophecy of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh. His sermon may be summarised as Jesus and the Resurrection shown to be a fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy. The effect of the sermon was marvellous, and the conversion of thousands to Christ testified to the efficacy of the Old Testament Scriptures as a preparation for the coming of the true Messiah.

'Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the Apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved' (Acts ii. verses 41-47).

Here we have a deeply interesting word-picture of the early Church, which had been thus suddenly increased from a hundred and twenty souls, by the addition of three thousand converts. The four marks of the Apostolic Church are here set forth to be steadfast continuance in the Apostles' teaching, in the Apostles' fellowship, that is, in the Christian Society united in one fellowship in Christ, in the Breaking of Bread, that is, the Holy Communion, already the central act of worship, and 'the prayers' (R.V.) that is, the regular meeting for common prayer. Such was the enthusiasm of their brotherly love that they shared everything with one another; an experiment in brotherly common life worthy of admiration, but not apparently feasible in a large society, and soon tacitly abandoned in this.

They were still pious Jews, who had not abandoned Judaism, but merely added to it its fulfilment, and they were daily in the Temple for worship, for prayer and praise, in which all could join, and they broke bread at home, that is partook of the Holy Communion, their most sacred service, confined to the Brotherhood, in their houses; and the note of the simplest parts of life, such as taking their daily food, was gladness and singleness of heart. The life of the infant Church was a new common life, lived in a new power, the power of the presence of the **Risen Lord** realised in the **Spirit**. 'And the

Lord added to the church daily, such as should be saved' ('those that were being saved,' R.V.).

St. Peter had laid down the conditions of membership in the Apostolic Church, which remain the conditions to-day. They were as follows:—Repentance and Baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus for the remission of sins. Baptism in that name is still the door of entrance to the Christian Church, and Repentance and Faith are still required of those who enter. As yet, the primitive Church had favour with all the people. This day of Pentecost is rightly regarded as the birthday of the Christian Church, a second Nativity, the birth of Christ's new and glorious Body, which was then, and is now, intended to be the instrument of His Holy Spirit, as the body of His humiliation was in the days of His earthly ministry.

From this day forth the Apostles began to understand the teaching, so mysterious at the time it was given, which had followed the last Supper, the teaching, namely, that the Lord's departure was to be a gain and a joy to His disciples. The joyous experience of a society animated by the Holy Spirit of Christ, a society in which each lived for all, in which the interest of the community was paramount with the individual, in which each bore the other's burden, and so fulfilled the law of Christ, cast light on such once dark sayings as, 'Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you' (St. John xvi. verse 7).

'But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I' (St. John xiv. verses 26-28).

He had gone to the Father by a change of state of which the Ascension was the symbol. He had come again to His own, the coming of which the marvellous experience at Pentecost was only the beginning; and now they felt in themselves, in their life as a society, as well as in their life as individuals, that the Spirit of Him they had loved and known during His earthly ministry was dwelling in them, inspiring the heart of each brother and sister, and inspiring the greater heart of the divine brotherhood with the supernatural life that united every member of the Body with its Head.

The Acts of the Apostles is the earliest historic record of the first years of the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, who reigned at that time in the Church as a King within the Kingdom of God, the community of those who believed in and belonged to the Lord Jesus. The Acts of the Apostles is the Book of the Holy Spirit, the great record of His work. It has a special message for us, who are living under the same dispensation. We seen in that book that the earthly founders of the Church were conscious instruments under the direction of the one Spirit. We cannot doubt that it was this conscious submission of their lives in every detail to the personal guidance of the Spirit, that gave such power to the work of St. Peter and St. Paul, of St. Stephen and St. Philip.

The open vision of the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church which is granted to us in the Acts of the Apostles is needed in these days, that are not days of open vision, to enable us to realise the abiding presence of Christ with those who carry out His command, according to His promise, 'Lo, I am with you all the days (days of darkness as well as days of vision), even unto the end of the world.'

But the infant Church was not to remain long in favour with the people. Peter and John were going up to pray in the Temple. 'Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour' (Acts iii. verse 1). At one of the gates they saw a lame man on whom Peter fixed his eyes with John, and said, 'Look on us.' The man looked. 'Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have I give thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God' (Acts iii. verses 6-8).

Crowds collected in the Temple courts, at the sight of the healed man, and Peter improved the occasion and preached to them, his main points being that they had killed the Prince of Life, whom God had raised from the dead, and that faith in His name had accomplished the miracle that they had just seen done.

While Peter was preaching, the Priests, the Captain of the Temple, and the Sadducees arrested the Apostles and put them in prison for the night; but a great many who had heard the sermon believed, and the number of men in the Church rose thereupon to five thousand. Next day they were brought before the same judges who had condemned their Lord, Annas, Caiaphas, and others. They might well be alarmed at their danger. They were the same

Apostles who had deserted their Lord when He was arrested: but now they felt the influence of the Risen Lord, 'the power of his resurrection,' and Peter on behalf of all answered boldly to the question, 'By what power or by what name have ye done this?'

'Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole' (Acts iv. verses 8-10).

The High Priest and the rest of the judges were astonished at the boldness of Peter and John, and recognised that they were disciples of Jesus, 'and they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus.' They could not deny that the miracle had been performed, and they let Peter and John go after commanding them not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus.

Up to this time there had been no attempt to extend the Church to the Gentiles. The Church was composed of devout Jews who believed in Jesus as the Messiah, and the Saviour God had raised from the dead. They worshipped in the Temple, and continued all the observances of Judaism. Undeterred by the warnings of the High Priest, the Apostles continued to frequent the Temple, and fresh converts were added, and great miracles were wrought on the sick by Peter, till multitudes poured in from the cities round about Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those vexed with unclean spirits, and they were healed every one. Then the Sadducee High Priest and his supporters of the same party, furious at the preaching of the Resurrection, arrested the Apostles and put them in the common prison. Miraculously delivered from prison, they boldly went straight to the Temple and again taught the people. Arrested again, they were brought before the Council, and the High Priest again rebuked them. 'Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him. When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them' (Acts v. verses 29-33).

Then a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a learned man of great reputation, commanded the Apostles to be removed and in their absence

advised the Sanhedrin to let them alone. They took his advice, and contented themselves with beating the Apostles, and commanding them not to speak in the name of Jesus.

'And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ' (Acts v. verses 41, 42).

It is interesting to consider whence St. Luke obtained the knowledge of Gamaliel's secret advice. His informant was most probably St. Paul, who had been a favourite pupil of Gamaliel, and who may well himself have been present at this meeting of the Sanhedrin. He was at that time a leading Pharisee, bitterly opposed to the Church of the Lord Jesus, the brotherhood which was as yet more like a Jewish sect than a body organized to teach a world-religion.

In the sixth chapter of the Acts we read of the appointment of the seven Deacons, to look after the interests of the foreign Jews, who complained that their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. The Deacons were selected by the body of the Church, but ordained by the Apostles who, when they had prayed, laid their hands on them, just as Ordination is carried out to-day. Two of these Deacons, Stephen and Philip, proved to be notable evangelists: Stephen, especially, produced such an effect by his miracles and his powerful preaching, that the Jews, whom he had worsted in argument, worked up an agitation against him, and dragged him before the Sanhedrin. False witnesses were brought against him, as they had been brought against his Lord. The account of Stephen's trial reads like the description of one who had been present at it, especially such a touch as this: 'And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel' (Acts vi. verse 15).

A question from the High Priest drew from Stephen a long and powerful apology. The stoning and death of the first martyr followed immediately on the close of his address, and his last words show the effects of the Crucifixion, being clearly inspired by his Lord's words, spoken as they nailed Him to the Cross.

'When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, and cast him

out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep' (Acts vii. verses 54-60).

A party to the stoning of Stephen, as we learn, was the young Pharisee, Saul, in whom Stephen's faithful witness-bearing, and the wonderful glory of the Christ-likeness, the Christ living in His servant, were soon to bear fruit. The death was the signal for a great persecution, in which Saul took a leading part. We can easily guess from whom St. Luke obtained the account of Stephen's trial and martyrdom, when we remember that St. Luke was the companion and friend of St. Paul, the sometime persecutor Saul.

The persecution had an opposite effect to that intended. It scattered the members of the Church from Jerusalem, not only through Palestine, but beyond its borders, and in so doing spread the Gospel and the Church far and wide.

'Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word' (Acts viii. verse 4).

The first of those of whose work we read is Philip, the deacon, who went down to the city of Samaria to proclaim Christ to them.

Impressed by Philip's miracles of healing, the multitude joyfully received his teaching. This was a first step towards evangelising the Gentiles, for the Samaritans were regarded by the Jews as half heathens. The Apostles showed their large-mindedness by at once sending Peter and John to Samaria, and all was done under authority, decently and in order.

'Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (for as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost' (Acts viii. verses 14-17).

Upon their way back from the town of Samaria, Peter and John preached the Gospel to many Samaritan villages. Then a message came from God to Philip to go south towards Gaza. There he met an Ethiopian official of great position, returning from worship at Jerusalem, and reading the prophet Isaiah, Here we see the Spirit at work. 'Go near,' said the Spirit to Philip, 'and join thyself to this chariot' (Acts viii. verse 29). Philip ran to him, and

heard him reading, and said, 'Understandest thou what thou readest?' (verse 30). The Ethiopian knew he did not understand, and with wise humility asked for guidance. He was reading the most wonderful prophecy in the Old Testament, the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, the prediction of the suffering servant of God literally fulfilled in the sufferings of Jesus Christ.

'Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing' (Acts viii. verses 35-39).

This baptism of the Ethiopian was the first definite step of which we know towards making Christianity a religion for all mankind. We observe that it was undertaken by Philip, not at the instance of the Apostles, but solely under the personal guidance of the Holy Spirit. The intense realisation of a personal Spirit of Christ dwelling in believers and exercising direction over their thoughts and actions is manifested in this account, which no doubt came from Philip, in whose house at Cæsarea St. Luke at one time had stayed with St. Paul.

Meanwhile the persecution of the disciples of the Lord by the Jews of Jerusalem grew fiercer under the leadership of Saul. Not satisfied with driving them out of Jerusalem and Judæa, he wished to follow their flight and hunt them down wherever they found refuge, even in distant lands.

'And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the High Priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.' And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be

told thee what thou must do. And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink' (Acts ix. verses 1-9).

'The Way' is the earliest name for the Christian religion, for the name 'Christian' did not yet exist.

This great objective vision of the Risen Lord changed Saul from a persecutor into an Apostle of Christ. It may perhaps be connected with the preparation for it in Saul's experience of the death of Stephen, and of the more than mortal sweetness of that martyr's last prayer.

The reality of Christ's universal presence, thus wondrously revealed to Saul, never left him. The words, 'Why persecutest thou me?' revealed to Saul the presence of Christ in believers in him: nay, more, it revealed a continuous life of Christ on earth, in virtue of His divine nature. Out of heaven the Risen Lord spoke of Himself as still on earth. St. Paul learned the lesson of this revelation very perfectly, as we learn from his epistles.

'Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church' (Colossians i. verse 24).

'I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me' (Galatians ii. verse 20).

The consciousness of Christians that they are the instruments of Christ, that their bodies are the body in which He now dwells on earth, carries with it the power of a consecrated life. To feel that it is Christ's purpose to carry out His own Incarnation in you, not without your co-operation, and to employ you to help on the same purpose in others, is the strongest incentive to a truly religious walk.

This appearance to Saul is classed by him with the other appearances after the Resurrection as being objective and personal like them. It was a long time after the Ascension that this appearance took place, probably six or eight years, 'And last of all, as unto one born out of due time, he appeared to me also' (1 Corinthians xv. verse 8). It is worth noting here, as evidence of the general level-headedness and trustworthiness of the Church members that though there was the strongest expectation in the Apostolic Church of the return of the Lord, no one among the many enthusiastic believers,

eagerly watching for the Ascended Lord's immediate visible return, claimed to have seen that return.

There is not the slightest sign of subjective hallucinations, in the New Testament, being mistaken for real objective appearances either in the experiences of St. Paul or of the other Apostles. St. Paul perceived indeed, as he was praying in the Temple, the Lord speaking to him, but we are told that he had fallen into a trance. Again at Corinth, and later on at Jerusalem (Acts xviii. verse 9), the Lord spoke to him by night in a vision, but the trance and the night visions or dreams are clearly separated as different from the appearance on the road to Damascus in kind and not in degree. The effect of that noonday appearance on the road to Damascus on St. Paul's conception of Christ's presence in individual believers and in the believing community is manifest in many passages in the Epistles. This points to the objective nature of the appearance. The overwhelming effect on St. Paul and the completely new life on which he entered on his recovery, and persevered in to the end of his life, is evidence to the same effect.

'And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests? But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ' (Acts ix. verses 20-22).

Not long after this wonderful change, Saul retired into Arabia, no doubt for solitary meditation and prayer, and as a preparation for the life-work which the Lord's words had already revealed to him he was appointed to do. Thence he returned to Damascus. Here we must leave him till he re-appears after a period of several years, briefly referred to in Galatians i.

Meanwhile the Church in Palestine was gradually broadening under the leadership of St. Peter. After the conversion of Saul the persecution which he had headed cooled down.

'Then had the churches rest throughout all Judæa and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied' (Acts ix. verse 31).

Peter took advantage of the peaceful condition of things, and went to visit the Churches, in the exercise of that Apostolic over-seership, which was in due course by God's appointment to develop into Episcopacy. In the course of his visitation he came to Joppa, where he lodged with one Simon, a tanner, by the seaside. There

he had a vision, while in a deep sleep upon the housetop, to which he had gone to get privacy for prayer. The vision taught him he was to call nothing common or unclean. 'What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.' While he doubted in himself how he was to understand the vision, three men, sent by Cornelius, a centurion stationed at Cæsarea, arrived and asked for Peter, and explained the desire that Cornelius had said that Peter should come to him. Guided by the Spirit, Peter went with them. At Cæsarea Cornelius explained his purpose, and Peter now fully perceived the meaning of the vision he had seen. Peter thereupon preached the Gospel of Christ, realising that the heathen were neither common or unclean.

Cornelius and his household received the Holy Ghost, and were baptized. Thus Peter not only received the three thousand Jews into the Church on the Day of Pentecost, but now at Cæsarea received the first fruits of the Gentiles. When he returned to Jerusalem, there was sharp opposition to be faced from those who considered that the Church should be limited to the Circumcision, that is, the Jews; but Peter told the whole story of his vision, and went on, 'And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water: but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God? When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life' (Acts xi. verses 15-18).

The persecution that arose after the martyrdom of Stephen had scattered abroad the followers of Christ, who preached the Word (that is, the Gospel message—the good news of God) wherever they went, but to Jews only. Afterwards some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, came to Antioch, and preached the Lord Jesus to the Greeks, of whom a great number turned to the Lord. When the news of this great conversion of Gentiles reached Jerusalem the Church there sent to them Barnabas, probably because he was a Cypriote, and the movement was of Cypriote origin. Barnabas, after he had done much by his own preaching, went to Tarsus to seek for Saul, who was apparently in retirement there, waiting for God's call.

The two returned together to Antioch, where they laboured for a whole year and taught much people, and 'the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch' (Acts xi. verse 26). This uni-

versal name of the followers of Christ seems to have originated among the heathen populace. It was in the lowest part of the community that Tacitus first observed the name in Rome. It is unlikely that the name is of Jewish invention, as the last thing Jews would wish would be to connect the hated sect with the Messiah. As little likely is it that it originated in the Church, the members of which called themselves 'The Way,' 'The Brethren,' 'The Disciples,' 'The Saints,' 'The Faithful,' 'The Elect.' When Agrippa, evidently with scornful emphasis, uses the name (Acts xxvi.), St. Paul avoids it in his reply, by a circumlocution. The contempt with which the first Christians were regarded in the Roman Empire is evidenced by such insulting caricatures as the Palatine graffito, probably of the second century, which represents a Christian worshipping a crucified man with an ass's head. The use of the term in 1 Peter iv. verses 15, 16, shows that the heathen employed it as synonymous with 'evildoer,' while the references of Latin writers to the Christians show the gross misrepresentations to which they were exposed. They whose law was really universal brotherly love were actually condemned, as Tacitus tells us, 'for hatred of the human race.'

It was appropriately from the Church, at Antioch, on the members of which the heathen had fixed this term of reproach, that the first organized mission was sent out to this contemptuous heathen world.

Antioch was a great city, the capital of Syria, and it might have seemed that there was ample work for Barnabas and Saul to do there, but the Holy Ghost guided to a different conclusion the Church, which numbered among its teachers and prophets men from North Africa and Cyprus, and one from a king's court, Herod's foster-brother, Manaen, who as a boy had been brought up with him at the Emperor's court at Rome. The mighty invisible force, the spirit of the Lord Jesus, which had led the Church at Antioch to choose its best men, Barnabas and Saul, now sent them forth, as conscious instruments solemnly ordained for their work by prayer and the laying on of hands, as our clergymen are ordained now.

To the eye of any heathen philosopher or man of affairs who had known the fact and the purpose of their going forth, there would have seemed to be something supremely ridiculous in the mission of the two poor Jews, to change the religion and the life of the cultivated and wealthy world of the Roman Empire. The vastness of their task emphasised the inadequacy of their equipment. But it is not the seen things but the unseen things that are eternal, and the unseen superhuman power of Christ of which they were the

willing instruments might be depended upon, they believed, to supply all their need out of His fulness. One of them, Saul, soon to be called Paul, had the assurance of a special mission from the great revelation which had been made to him on the road to Damascus. He knew that the Risen Christ had appointed him and sent him as His Apostle to the Gentiles, to open their eyes that they might turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. 'Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me' (Acts xxvi. verses 17, 18). Obedient to the heavenly Guide who had so miraculously appeared to him, and ever afterwards directed his steps, the Apostle to the Gentiles began his work.

The destination of the messengers was Cyprus, and they sailed from Seleucia, the port of Antioch. At Paphos, in Cyprus, a struggle took place between Paul and a sorcerer, a false prophet named Bar-Jesus, or Elymas, who was endeavouring to prevent the Roman Pro-Consul, Sergius Paulus, a man of uncommon understanding, from listening to the Gospel. So vigorous and convincing was Saul, that the Pro-Consul believed, and from this time the Man of Tarsus stands first in the record of the journey. His name, too, is from this time changed to Paul. The missionaries came to Cyprus, Barnabas and Saul: they left it 'Paul and his company' (Acts xiii. verse 13).

From Paphos they sailed to Perga in Pamphylia, a Greek city with a celebrated temple to the goddess Artemis. From Perga they pushed at once through the wild ranges of the Taurus, to Antioch in Pisidia. Paul, as usual, went to the synagogue on the Sabbath-day, and addressed his countrymen there. This is the first sermon of Paul recorded in the Acts, and there is not a little resemblance to Stephen's sermon recorded in Acts vii., an indication perhaps of one of the influences which had worked for Paul's conversion. The sermon made a great impression, and Paul was invited to speak the next Sabbath-day.

When the day came, almost the whole city collected to hear the word of God. But the Jews, jealous of the Gentiles, contradicted and blasphemed, and Paul and Barnabas then boldly laid down the missionaries' future line of action. The word of God must be spoken to the Jews first, but when they rejected it the missionaries turned to the Gentiles. This encounter, at Antioch in Pisidia, with the Jews who succeeded afterwards in expelling Paul and

Barnabas from the city, disclosed the source of the main opposition which Paul had to encounter throughout his missionary work. It was the same at Iconium and Lystra, to the latter of which towns Jews from Antioch and Iconium pursued the Preachers of the Word, and induced the fickle Lycaonians (who had first taken Barnabas and Paul for gods and sought to offer sacrifices to them) to stone Paul, whom they dragged out of the city, supposing he was dead. The excited stoning of a mob, however, was a very different matter from a deliberate execution by stoning in Jerusalem, and Paul recovered. The 'perils by mine own countrymen' to which Paul referred in one of his Epistles (2 Corinthians xi. verse 26), were sufficiently in evidence during this first missionary journey, and it was also quite certain from the numbers of Gentiles that believed that the Gentile world was ready to receive the Gospel, and the only question was what the terms of membership should be.

It must not be forgotten that the infant religion of Christ was still in the cradle of Judaism. The Brethren at Jerusalem still lived the lives of pious Jews, who held Circumcision to be an essential, and the whole ceremonial law binding on every member of the Church. Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch, thus completing what is known as the first missionary journey of St. Paul. The date of this missionary journey of St. Paul is about 48 A.D.

A meeting of the Church was held at Antioch, at which the missionaries told all that God had done for them, and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. Some time after, however, men arrived from Judæa, and taught the Brethren 'except ye be circumcised . . . ye cannot be saved' (Acts xv. verse 1). Discussions followed, and Paul and Barnabas were sent to Jerusalem to the Apostles and elders about this question. The Apostles and elders and the rest of the Church met together, and Peter declared against laying the burden of Circumcision and the Law on the Gentiles that believed. The body of the Church, however, said nothing, while Paul and Barnabas told the wondrous works which God had wrought by them. When they had done, the head of the Church at Jerusalem, James, the brother of the Lord, gave it as his judgment that the Gentiles who turned to God ought not to be troubled with the Ceremonial Law. It is probably safe to assume that this council at Jerusalem (Acts xv. verses 1-23) is that which is described by St. Paul in Galatians ii. verses 1-10: 'Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run,

or had run, in vain. But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: and that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: to whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you. But of these who seemed to be somewhat (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person:) for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me: but contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; (for he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision. Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.'

Paul seems to have shown extraordinary power of persuasion and the gifts of a born leader of men in the way he won over the pillars of the Church in Jerusalem, James and Peter and John, to acknowledge his apostleship to the Gentiles, that to him had been entrusted the Gospel of the Uncircumcision, as to Peter the Gospel of the Circumcision. This was a great triumph for the cause Paul had at heart, the loosening of the fetters of Judaism from the Gospel of Christ, that it might become supreme, as the universal religion of mankind.

The second missionary journey, which followed the Council, was marked by the extension of St. Paul's campaign to Europe, and the writing of the first letters which we possess, 1 and 2 Thessalonians. If we date the first journey approximately about 48 A.D. we may date the second about 51 A.D. Paul and Barnabas separated owing to Paul's refusal to take Mark with him, but remained friends, and we find Mark, after a considerable interval, restored to Paul's company and confidence. Paul took Silas as his companion. Silas was a prophet and a Jew, and, like Paul, a Roman citizen. He had been sent, together with Judas called Barsabas, to declare to the Gentiles at Antioch the liberal terms of membership decided on by the Council at Jerusalem, and now he went forth with Paul on the second missionary journey. They went first through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the Churches. Then they went to South Galatia again. At Lystra they added to their party Timothy, the son of

Eunice, a Jewess and a believer. Timothy was evidently a convert of St. Paul's own making, and the dearest of all to the Apostle's affectionate heart. Paul was still the conscious and obedient instrument of the Holy Ghost, as we see from the following passage:

'Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, after they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not. And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas' (Acts xvi. verses 6-8).

At Troas, a night vision came to Paul, asking for help to be given to Macedonia, and in obedience to what he held to be a call from God, he set sail for Macedonia. Luke was now with Paul, for he speaks of 'we'—*e.g.*, 'We sought to go forth into Macedonia' (Acts xvi. verse 10), and so we know Paul had the author of the Acts with him. The principal places visited in Europe were Philippi, Thessalonica, Beræa, Athens, and Corinth. At Philippi, an important Roman colony, Lydia, a seller of purple, a native of Thyatira in Asia, was converted and baptized, together with her household, and insisted on giving the missionaries a home, supplying for Christ's Apostle the ministering care which the sisters of Bethany had given to the Master while on earth. Lydia was the first convert at Philippi, and thus a woman was the beginning of the most satisfactory and devoted of all the Churches founded by St. Paul. Here it was that, after Paul had cast out from a Greek girl a spirit of divination, her masters, indignant at the loss of their gains by her soothsaying, dragged him and Silas before the magistrates, by whom they were arrested, beaten with rods and imprisoned, and Paul, after the remarkable conversion and baptism of the gaoler and his household, used the Roman citizenship of himself and Silas with such effect that the magistrates were obliged to come and entreat them to leave the prison.

At Thessalonica, the capital of Macedonia, the Jews, moved with jealousy, organized an attack of the rabble on the missionaries, raising a transparently false charge of sedition. From Thessalonica the Brethren sent Paul and Silas, by night, to Beræa, where the Jews gave Paul a fair hearing, searching the Scriptures to verify his statements, and the consequence was that many believed. At Athens, Paul was met by certain Epicureans and Stoics, who found the kernal of his preaching in 'Jesus and the Resurrection,' but took the latter word (*anastasis*) for the name of a deity. 'And they took hold of him and brought him unto the Areopagus' (*i.e.*, Mars' Hill), 'saying, May we know what this new teaching is which is spoken by thee?' (R.V.).

'Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' Hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious ('somewhat religious,' R.M.). For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE ('AN,' R.V.) UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands: neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at ('overlooked,' R.V.); but now commandeth all men every where to repent: because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead' (Acts xvii. 22-31). The poets referred to were Aratus and Cleanthes.

The address had not much effect on the Athenians, though Dionysius, the Areopagite, believed, and Damaris, and others with them.

From Athens St. Paul went to Corinth, where he joined one Aquila with his wife Priscilla, who had had to leave Rome owing to the decree of the Emperor Claudius for the expulsion of the Jews. Though strongly opposed by the Corinthian Jews, Paul preached the Gospel with great effect to the Gentiles, and stayed in Corinth eighteen months.

The Jews, however, brought him before Seneca's brother, the Pro-Consul of Achaia, Gallio, who dismissed the case with scorn, and took no notice when the Corinthians beat Paul's accuser, Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, before the judgment-seat.

The first Epistle to the Thessalonians, the earliest book in the New Testament (A.D. 51), was written from Corinth, and the second Epistle from the same place soon after the first.

After he left Corinth he sailed for Syria, intending to return to Jerusalem, from which he had been absent three years. He was anxious to keep up harmonious relations with the Apostles and the

mother-church there. His compliance as a loyal Jew with the Jewish law is recorded in this passage of the Acts, 'having shorn his head in Cenchrea; for he had a vow' (Acts xviii. verse 18). This means that he had taken a Nazarite vow and let his hair grow long in accordance with it. It was permitted to cut the hair without waiting to arrive at Jerusalem provided that the hair was kept and burnt under the sacrifice of the peace-offerings which the Nazarite had to offer there. From Cenchrea he visited Ephesus, promising to return again, and sailed from Ephesus, landed at Cæsarea, saluted the Church at Jerusalem, and returned to Antioch. This was the end of the second missionary journey.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES (THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY—JERUSALEM—RIOT—ARREST BY ROMANS—CAESAREA—FELIX—FESTUS—KING AGRIPPA—APPEAL TO CAESAR—SHIPWRECK AT MALTA—FIRST IMPRISONMENT—LAST MISSIONARY JOURNEY—LAST IMPRISONMENT—MARTYRDOM).

THE third missionary journey, which is described in Acts xviii. verse 23, to xxi. verse 17, began from Antioch, where St. Paul had been staying for some time, about the year 54 A.D. He first went through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, visiting and strengthening the Churches he had founded. Then he came to Ephesus, to which he had promised to return when he visited it hurriedly towards the close of his second journey. There, he came upon the traces of a learned and eloquent Jew of Alexandria, named Apollos, mighty in the Scriptures, who had been not fully acquainted with Christian truth till he was instructed by Aquila and Priscilla, Paul's friends, who worked with him at Ephesus, and afterwards sent him on to Corinth, where Paul later wrote appreciatively of his work: 'I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase' (1 Corinthians iii. verse 6). Paul remained in Ephesus three years. It was the city in which he made his longest stay and did his greatest work, to judge by the Epistle to the Ephesians, which only enlightened Christians could have understood and appreciated. At first he taught in the synagogue, but when attacks were made on the Way (*i.e.*, the Church), he separated from the Jews, and taught in the school or lecture-room of one Tyrannus. He appears to have taught from eleven to four daily. He continued teaching there for two years, and all that dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord.

Ephesus was a great city, the chief city of the Roman province of Asia, a great centre of trade, a great centre of luxury and learning, with a large population of many races.

The most magnificent building in this magnificent city was the great temple of Artemis (the Latinised form of the name is Diana), celebrated throughout the ancient world. The city rejoiced in being called the Temple-keeper, or Temple-warden, of the goddess and of her image, which was supposed to have fallen down from heaven. Her rows of breasts represent her function as the nourishing or nursing mother of all life. She was an Asian goddess

(Asia means the Roman Province) and very unlike the chaste Artemis of Greek literature and mythology. She personified the reproductive power of nature and the nourishing power of the earth. She had close analogies with the Phrygian Cybele, and her worship was carried on by troops of priests, the vilest and most degraded of mankind. Inside this vast and magnificent temple, with its pillars of Parian marble, were masterpieces of sculpture by Praxiteles and Phidias. Of the paintings, the most celebrated was the portrait of Alexander the Great, by Apelles, the most renowned painter of the ancient world, valued at about five thousand pounds.

Ephesus was not only a sink of every sort of immorality, but it was also full of dark superstitions and sorceries. On this heathen population St. Paul produced marvellous effects by his preaching, emphasised by his miracles. Diseases were cured and evil spirits were cast out by the power that worked in and through the great Apostle. The strolling Jew exorcists who tried to use the name of the Lord Jesus to help them in their trade, failed completely, though their attempt shows how widespread was the Apostle's reputation for success. 'And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. And many that believed came and confessed, and shewed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed' (Acts xix. verses 17-20).

The books burned were estimated to be worth over 1700*l.*, and the sacrifice proved the sincerity of the erring converts' repentance. While he was at Ephesus, St. Paul wrote his first letter to Corinth, about some serious troubles that had arisen there. In it he mentioned that 'a great door and effectual is opened unto me' (1 Corinthians xvi. verse 9). After two and a half years he was preparing for a journey into Macedonia, when a great disturbance arose at Ephesus about the Way. The success of Paul's preaching had alarmed Demetrius, the silversmith who made silver shrines (small representations of the goddess Artemis in her shrine) and who was probably the master of the Guild of the Associated Trades that year. Guild-life was very highly developed in the cities of Asia Minor, and was especially powerful in Ephesus.

In defence of the interests of the trades, Demetrius delivered an inflammatory speech, probably in the hall of the guild. The disturbance spread to the streets, and the crowd at last rushed into

the theatre, the remains of which to-day represent an edifice that must have seated twenty-four thousand persons. It is to be noted, as an indication of the progress St. Paul had made at Ephesus, that certain of the Asiarchs (Roman officials of the province) were his friends, and would not allow him to adventure his life among the crowd in the theatre.

The town clerk, or secretary of the city, at last quieted down the riot, by warnings of the punishment the citizens would receive from the Roman Government, which tolerated no disorder. The riot itself, caused by the decreasing business of the shrine-makers, is eloquent testimony to the success of Paul's two and a half years' preaching at Ephesus. After all was over, Paul carried out his previous intention of going into Macedonia. When he had visited that region and exhorted them, he went to Greece. He spent three months there, and then returned through Macedonia, and, sailing from Philippi, arrived at Troas.

At this town we have a very striking account of early Christian worship, and how it was carried on at that time with the approval of St. Paul.

'And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples ('we,' R.V.) came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight. And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together. And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead. And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him. When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread ('broken the bread,' R.V.), and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed. And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted' (Acts xx. verses 7-12).

Here we have a picture of how Sunday was kept in the primitive Church. The day may perhaps be identified with April 24th, A.D. 57. The members of the Church met in an upper room, no doubt in memory of the Upper Room in Jerusalem. They met to break bread, that is to join in the Holy Communion. It was an evening service prolonged till after midnight, and there were many lights in the upper room. It is from the use of lights, a necessary part of evening Communion in the primitive Church, that the use of lights in our celebrations of Holy Communion in the morning is derived. The only regular service at this time and even in the

second century, in the time of Justin Martyr, was gathered round the Holy Communion or Eucharist. In the second century, these evening services were forbidden by the Roman Emperor, and morning services substituted. This record of the service at Troas comes from St. Luke himself, who was present. The 'we' is resumed at Philippi, and where the 'we' occurs in the narrative, we know throughout the Book of the Acts that St. Luke is with St. Paul.

From Troas, Paul's companions sailed to Assos, where they took in Paul, and touching at Mitylene, Chios, and Samos, arrived at Miletus, where Paul sent a message to Ephesus to summon to him the elders of the Church.

Ephesus was the town where, as we have observed, Paul's longest stay was made, and perhaps his greatest missionary work was done. Paul himself had a high opinion of the opening for the Gospel which he had found in Ephesus, as we have noted in his two letters to the Corinthians. The elders came as Paul had invited them to do. St. Luke, no doubt, was present to take down a report of the address, which is one of the most beautiful and moving recorded as delivered by the Apostle.

'And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews: and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood'—a strong statement of the divinity of Christ. 'For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves

enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years, I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive' (Acts xx. verses 18-35).

The address gives us a very clear idea of the essentials of St. Paul's ministry, of the combination of earnestness and tenderness which so deeply endeared the Apostle to his brethren. The 'grievous wolves' of verse 29 were the Judaizers who were ever eager to undo the work of the great Apostle of the Gentiles. Long after this, Paul had to write to Timothy that 'All that are in Asia (*i.e.*, the Roman province) turned away from me.' The last words in his address are specially interesting as preserving a profound and beautiful saying of the Lord Jesus which is not to be found in the Gospels. After the address Paul kneeled down and prayed with the elders, who, by the way, are called elders and bishops in the same chapter, the terms in the first century being interchangeable, and the word bishop only in the second century being restricted to the chief elder, or presbyter, of a city.

The Ephesian elders were deeply affected by the address. They wept, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for his words (which proved too true) 'that they should see his face no more.' Paul had done a great deal of work after he had left Ephesus, though the account in the Acts of the Apostles is very brief. He wrote several of the letters to the Churches, which we still possess; the second epistle to the Corinthians was followed by the epistle to his own Galatians, who had fallen a prey to the Judaizers; to the great grief of Paul's loving heart.

A little later he wrote the great Epistle to the Romans, a weighty treatise on the complete sufficiency of faith in Christ for all the needs of man. While Paul was in Greece he revisited Corinth, and there and at the other churches which he visited, he received collections of money for the poor members of the Church at Jerusalem.

Paul's purpose during this missionary journey was to organize on

a large scale a company of delegates from the Gentile Churches, who would come with him to Jerusalem and offer the money collected for this purpose to the Church there. The main object of this collection, though no doubt it was needed by the poorer members of the Church at Jerusalem, was to promote brotherly feeling between the Jewish Christians and the Gentiles. It was firstly for the good of the Gentile Churches to learn how divine a thing it is to give generously. God loves a cheerful giver, and indeed, in possessing the giving spirit man becomes God-like, a partaker of the Divine nature. It was secondly intended to win the hearts of the exclusive Jewish brethren at Jerusalem, and dispose them no longer to regard the Gentile Christians as their inferiors, but to feel as Paul did: 'For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise' (Galatians iii. verses 26-29).

Paul well knew from personal experience that the special vice of the Jew was pride in regard to himself and contempt in regard to others. The Jewish Christians, or at any rate the Judaizers among them, were by no means free from this failing.

Paul journeyed to Jerusalem by way of Cæsarea, where he and Luke and the other members of the company stayed for a time with Philip the Evangelist. He was well received by James, the Lord's brother, the head of the Church at Jerusalem, and by the elders of the Church who all glorified God when Paul told what had been accomplished by his ministry. James and the elders told him that he was under suspicion among the Jewish believers, being accused of teaching the Jews who were among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, not to circumcise their children, and not to walk after the customs. This was not really true. It was only on the Gentiles that he taught that the old ceremonial law was not binding.

When principle was not at stake, Paul was most conciliatory, and he now took the advice of James; and complied with certain Jewish customs, so as to satisfy the Jewish Christians that he was a strictly orthodox Jew. But some Jews from Asia stirred up the Jews in Jerusalem against Paul, distorting his liberal teaching, and declaring that he had taken into the Temple a Greek from their own town of Ephesus, and so defiled it. An excited multitude dragged Paul out of the Temple, and would have killed him had not the Tribune in command of the Roman cohort at Jerusalem come to the rescue. Paul was about to be brought into the Castle,

and as he came upon the stairs asked the chief captain to allow him to speak to the people. Leave was given, and Paul told his countrymen the wonderful experience of his own conversion. They gave him a good hearing till he came to the words which the Lord Jesus had spoken to him, 'Depart, for I will send thee forth far hence to the Gentiles.' At this, they behaved as if their rage had driven them mad. The very idea that the Gentiles could be God's people seemed grossly insulting to these bigoted Jews. The chief captain was on the point of scourging Paul, when he told the centurion he was a Roman. The chief captain when he heard it not only gave up the scourging, but was afraid, because he had no right to bind a Roman citizen uncondemned. Next day, Claudius Lysias, as the chief captain was called, ordered the Sanhedrin to meet, and brought Paul before them. This was the court that had condemned our Lord, and had also had before it Stephen, and Peter and John. Paul very skilfully appealed to the Pharisees in the Sanhedrin on the question of the Resurrection, an abstract belief in the possibility of which they shared with him. The contest between the rival parties in the Sanhedrin became so hot that Paul was in danger of being torn to pieces, and the Roman soldiers had to rescue him once more. Next day the discovery through information supplied by his sister's son of a plot which forty Jews had made to kill Paul, induced the chief captain to send him strongly guarded to the Roman Procurator, Felix, at Cæsarea. After Paul had been five days at Cæsarea, the high priest and some elders from Jerusalem came up and accused him before Felix. The result of this was that the trial was postponed till Lysias, the chief captain, should come down.

After two years, during which Paul remained in prison, Felix was succeeded as Procurator by Porcius Festus. Paul's enemies pressed Festus to send him to Jersulaem for trial, intending to kill him on the way, but Festus preferred to examine him at Cæsarea.

At the trial, Festus, being evidently inclined to curry favour with the Jews and possibly to give the prisoner up to them, Paul formally appealed to Cæsar, that is, to the highest tribunal in the Empire. As Paul was a Roman citizen, Festus was obliged to accept the appeal, and send him to Rome to plead before the Emperor. Before he went, however, Agrippa, the last and worst of the Herods, visited Cæsarea.

Festus told him about Paul, and aroused his curiosity. By Agrippa's desire Paul was brought before him, and made an eloquent defence, in which he told again the story of his conversion. Its effect on Festus gives us an idea of the deep excitement

with which St. Paul recalled those marvellous experiences, for Festus interrupted the prisoner, saying that his learning was driving him mad. Paul's argument to King Agrippa, who represented the position of the educated Jew, is this, that he (Paul) was a perfectly orthodox Jew, and preached nothing but what the Prophets and Moses had predicted. Christianity as set forth by St. Paul was simply the appointed fulfilment of Judaism. Paul's argument was not intended for Festus who, being a Roman, could not understand it, but for King Agrippa, to whom he made his final appeal: 'King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.' The king answered with some haughtiness, 'With but little persuasion (*i.e.*, cheaply) thou wouldst fain make me a Christian' (R.V., Acts xxvi. verses 27, 28: incorrectly translated in A.V., 'Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian').

The idea that a king, the friend and favourite of the Emperors Claudius and Nero, should be induced to join a despised little Jewish sect by a mere appeal to the Prophets seemed supremely ridiculous. In Agrippa's mouth the term Christian was unmistakably a term of contempt, and it is to be observed that St. Paul does not accept the term as applicable to himself.

The result of Paul's appearance before Agrippa was his virtual acquittal. Agrippa's words to Festus summed up the situation: 'This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Cæsar' (Acts xxvi. verse 32).

It must be remembered that it was not only to escape the bitter persecution of the Jews that he made this appeal. As long ago as his stay at Ephesus he had planned to reach Rome. 'After I have been there, I must also see Rome' (Acts xix. verse 21). In the Epistle to the Romans, written during the second missionary journey, he wrote to the Christian Church at Rome that he had for many years a longing to come to them whenever he went to Spain, and he added in the twenty-eighth verse, 'When therefore I have performed this . . . I will come by you into Spain' (Romans xv. verse 28). Paul and certain other prisoners were given into the charge of a centurion named Julius, of the Augustan cohort, and sent on the first opportunity to Rome. The story of the voyage to Italy is evidently the record of an eye-witness, the prisoner's friend, Luke. Paul had also the companionship of Aristarchus of Thessalonica, who had been his companion in travel and had faced great risks during the riot at Ephesus.

The voyage lasted for about two months and was full of storm and peril, and must have been very trying to Paul when we remember that the prisoners were chained by the wrist to the soldiers

who had charge of them. The great storm that caught them near Crete evidently gave the opportunity for Paul to assert himself, as a man out of the common. This he did by words of wisdom and good cheer which encouraged all that were in the ship. Moreover, we find that he and Luke, to whom the narrative is due, helped in some of the work, for instance in securing the boat and lightening the ship. After many days of great hardship, in which they were all supported and encouraged by the fervent faith and calm confidence of Paul, the voyage ended with a shipwreck from which they all escaped safe to land. The wonderful accuracy of Luke's narrative of the voyage and the shipwreck has been full tested and proved, the measurements and soundings of the traditional St. Paul's bay corresponding marvellously with the description in the Acts. From Malta, where they stayed three months, the great missionary and his companions went on in a ship of Alexandria, which touched at Syracuse in Sicily, and finally landed them in Italy, at Puteoli, near Naples, the great port where the Egyptian cornships landed their cargoes. At this port they were received by the Christian Church of that place, and were persuaded to stay seven days. They had still a hundred and forty miles between them and Rome. Forty-three miles from Rome, at the Market of Appius, the Brethren met them, and again ten miles on, at the Three Taverns. At Rome they found themselves in the capital of the Roman Empire, which comprised the whole of the civilised world at that time, from Persia to Spain and from North Africa and Egypt to Britain.

The population of Rome, the greatest city of the day, was between one and two millions, and there was a very large colony of Jews. The Christian Church had been established there some time, though we have no record of its beginnings. We read, however, that among the crowd which were present at Pentecost were 'sojourners from Rome, both Jews and proselytes.' We also read in the last chapter of the Epistle to the Romans of Andronicus and Junia, 'who also have been in Christ before me' (*i.e.*, before Paul).

From the number of persons to whom greeting is sent in the Epistle to the Romans, it is evident that there were many Gentiles as well as Jewish Christians in the Church at Rome and many whom St. Paul knew personally.

In the spring of the year 61 A.D. in the seventh year of the reign of Nero, Paul arrived in Rome. He was handed over to the care of the Prefect of the Prætorian Guard. The Prefect that year was the good Afranius Burrhus, and the prisoner, who came with the favourable report of all the Roman officials that had had to do with

him, was treated with leniency. He was allowed to rent a house, and to have free intercourse with his friends. But he was chained by the wrist to the soldier who guarded him.

It is evident that he felt much this irritating and ceaseless reminder of his imprisonment from his continual allusions to it in the Epistles which he wrote while thus in bonds. The perpetual presence of a rough soldier at his side must have made the complete loss of privacy particularly hard to bear to a man of Paul's very sensitive and high-strung nervous temperament. His stay at Rome, however, gave him great opportunities for usefulness. He began as usual by an appeal to those who were chief among the numerous Jewish community. At first he seemed to have made some impression, but in the end the Apostle found them deaf to the Gospel, and turned from them to the Gentiles. 'And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him' (Acts xxviii. verses 30, 31).

The two years in which this passage tells us St. Paul preached the Gospel probably ended about 63 A.D. During this period a great work was accomplished. Passages in the Epistles written at this time, notably in the Epistle to the Philippians, supplement the very brief reference to this work in the last two verses of the Acts of the Apostles. 'But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; and many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear' (Philippians i. verses 12-14).

This passage, if we translate the words 'in all the palace' (A.V.), by 'throughout the whole Prætorian guard' (R.V.), indicates that many soldiers of the Prætorian guard had accepted the Gospel. Again, in Philippians iv. verse 22, we find an indication that the Gospel had reached the household of Nero and made converts there: 'All the Saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Cæsar's household.' Why the Acts of the Apostles stops as it does, and tells us nothing in detail of the Apostle's life during these years, we cannot say. We learn from Philemon, verse 24, that St. Luke as well as St. Mark, with Demas and Aristarchus, were fellow-workers with St. Paul at that time, as also was the Apostle's spiritual son, Timothy, and other less-known names. It was during these years that the four Epistles of the First Captivity, as they are called—the Epistles to the Philippians, Ephesians Colossians, and Phile-

mon—were written. It was probably after the death of Agrippina, but certainly during the ascendancy of Poppæa, that Paul arrived at Rome.

The Apostle's mild imprisonment appears to have ended in his acquittal, possibly after a trial before Nero in person. After the Apostle was set free, he seems at once to have carried out the intention of visiting the Churches he had founded, revealed in the Epistle to Philemon and in that to the Philippians. He had years before planned to visit Spain, and this he appears to have done, if we accept the evidence of Clement.

The references in the Pastoral Epistles (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus) to a last missionary journey in the East, previous to the second imprisonment, are sufficiently clear.

He intended to winter at Nicopolis, in Epirus, when he wrote (Titus iii. verse 12). He had been at Troas: 'The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments' (2 Timothy iv. verse 13). He had probably been at Corinth and certainly at Miletus: 'Erastus abode at Corinth: but Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick' (2 Timothy iv. verse 20).

From 1 Timothy i. verse 3, we gather that this Epistle was written in Macedonia, from whence he writes Timothy directions for his work at Ephesus. Taking 61 to 63 A.D. to be the period of his first imprisonment at Rome, and 67 A.D. to be the date of his martyrdom, four years are left for the visitation of the Eastern Churches, for the missionary visit to Spain, for the missionary tour in Crete, and for the tour in Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Achaia, referred to in the Pastoral Epistles. This last missionary journey ended with the second imprisonment and second trial. It was during the absence of Paul on these missionary journeys (if we accept the chronology given above) that an event had taken place which completely altered the position of Christians at Rome.

In July 64 A.D. a great fire broke out in Rome, which raged for nine days and destroyed a large part of the city. Suspicion fell upon Nero as the author of the fire, and in order to clear himself he laid the guilt of the conflagration on the Christians. The persecution which thereupon began at Rome, by the Emperor Nero's orders, changed the position of Christians over the whole Empire.

St. Paul was perhaps arrested at Troas, where, in the haste of the arrest, his books and parchments and cloak were left behind, and sent to Ephesus first for trial, and thence to Rome. At Rome he seems to have appeared before Nero, to whom he probably refers as the lion (compare the wild beast in Revelation) in his

latest Epistle, 2 Timothy iv. verse 17: 'And I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.'

His deliverance was only temporary. He was remanded and brought up for trial, and probably in A.D. 67, or, according to tradition, June 66 A.D., he was beheaded about three miles outside the walls of Rome, in a spot not far from the Ostian Road, then known as Aquæ Salviæ, now as Tre Fontane. The condemnation and execution of the Great Apostle has been handed down by a Roman tradition which is probably correct.

From the New Testament we know nothing later than the Apostle's own utterances during his second imprisonment, contained in the second Epistle to Timothy. In that Epistle he writes that he had already appeared at the bar of the Empire, and though without human support, yet with the Lord by his side, he had fully proclaimed the Gospel message. He was waiting now for the end, for this time he expected condemnation and death. Indeed, he felt his life was already being poured out like a drink-offering, and the time when the offering would be completed he knew had almost come. He waited for that end, in calm and happy confidence that the Lord whom he had served would reward him: 'For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight (*i.e.*, run a good race), I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing' (2 Timothy iv. verses 6-8).

This is the Apostle's brave and happy farewell to earthly life.

To study St. Paul's life intelligently is to realise the marvellous way in which the spirit of the Lord Jesus, the Holy Ghost, made a single Jew an effectual instrument in the foundation of the Church. The great human master-builder of the Catholic or universal Church had, long before the destruction of Jerusalem came to complete his work, changed the legalist Jewish Christianity which was practically little more than a sect of Judaism, into a world-religion. The many-sided nature, even more than the excellent education of the Apostle, gave him exceptional fitness for this great task. With a powerful and trained intellect and an imagination that soared often into the loftiest idealism, he combined a sound common sense and a careful attention to detail which are not generally found together. The depth of his tenderness rivalled the depth of his enthusiasm, but the secret of his power was in the fact that he was fully conscious that he was possessed by a spiritual Presence, the spiritual presence of the Risen and Ascended Lord

Jesus Christ who had dawned upon him like a glorious sunrise on the road to Damascus, and had remained with him a felt and realised Presence ever after. It was literal truth to him when he wrote to the Galatians: 'I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me' (Galatians ii. verse 20).

The same revelation on the road to Damascus had also taught Paul the presence of Christ in His Church, a real presence in the believing community as well as in the individual believer.

This continuance of the earthly life of the glorified Christ in the Church explains St. Paul's view of salvation for each and all. Each member of the Church is a member of the body which lives and moves to do the will of the glorified Christ, who, though departed to the Father, still holds direct intercourse with His disciples.

The power of this doctrine as an incentive to devoted service was shown most convincingly in the life of St. Paul himself. He felt in its fulness the far-reaching life of the Incarnation because he felt that life moving within him. His realisation of the heights and depths of this mystery revealed to him new and wonderful potentialities in human nature. And this same conscious union with Christ gave him the Master's tender love of souls which made him as great an evangelist as he was an organizer.

CHAPTER XXXII.

ST. PAUL'S EPISTLES GROUPED CHRONOLOGICALLY—THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS—THE SEVEN CATHOLIC EPISTLES—JAMES—I. AND II. PETER—I., II., AND III. JOHN—JUDE.

ST. PAUL'S chief legacy to mankind was the freeing of the Christian Church from the cramping bondage of Judiasm, and the carrying out of the intention of the Church's Head of making His religion a universal religion, and the Church a Catholic or universal Church. He left another legacy of priceless value, the thirteen Epistles that have survived out of his correspondence. These Epistles are not arranged chronologically in the New Testament; but to gain a full knowledge of their contents it is most important to arrange them in groups according to their true chronological order. Thus best can we understand the true inwardness of the Apostle's teaching by taking account of the difficulties and the needs it was intended to meet. For this purpose the Epistles may be divided into four groups. The first group consists of the first and second Epistles to the Thessalonians, written from Corinth about the year 51 A.D. The first Epistle is probably the earliest document in the New Testament. It contains a striking description of the resurrection of those that sleep in Jesus, and comforts the brethren with the hope of reunion with their loved ones hereafter. The second Epistle was written soon after the first. These Epistles teach Christian doctrine generally, and specially about the last things; that is, the second coming of Christ in judgment on a wicked world, which was then expected immediately.

In 2 Thessalonians ii. there are apparently allusions (*e.g.*, the mystery of lawlessness) to the growing Cæsar-worship, the worship of the Emperor as a god, which was spreading rapidly throughout the provinces of the Roman Empire. As long before as the year 39 A.D. Caligula had attempted to set up his statue in the Temple at Jerusalem; but it was not till the later part of the reign of Nero that persecution for refusing to worship the Emperor really set in. St. Paul, like St. John at a later date, perceived clearly that worldliness, then specially expressing itself as Emperor-worship, was the real rival of the worship of Jesus Christ. By insisting on that worship as a test of loyalty, the State arrayed the Em-

pire against the Church, and made the religion of Christ fight for its life.

The second group of letters may be dated from 55 to 58 A.D. They comprise the two Epistles to the Corinthians, the Epistle to the Galatians, and the Epistle to the Romans. These are the great Epistles of the controversy with Judaism. The first Epistle to the Corinthians, which comes first in this group, was written at Ephesus. Corinth was a wealthy heathen city, celebrated for its commerce and notorious for its luxury and immorality, and it is not at all surprising that Paul's converts had relapsed into the vices they had learnt in their heathen days. To meet the needs of Corinth, Paul found only one power effectual, Jesus Christ and Him crucified. The Cross he found the only cure for sin. To crucify the flesh, to die with Christ, proved to be the only way to substitute the life of the Spirit for the life of the Flesh. The Apostle's argument against sins of the flesh is as effectual to-day as it was then: 'Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ?' (1 Corinthians vi. verse 15). Again: 'What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not you own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's (1 Corinthians vi. verses 19, 20).

Similarly, in dealing with the question of abstinence from meats offered to idols, the Apostle lays down an eternal principle. We must be careful in exercising our Christian liberty, not to cause our weak brother to stumble or perish, 'for whom Christ died.'

'Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend' (1 Corinthians viii. verse 13).

In the eleventh chapter the irreverent conduct that had arisen in connection with the love-feasts and the subsequent celebration of the Lord's Supper is dealt with in a way which gives us an exceedingly interesting picture of the public worship of the primitive Church. We find the great Sacrament of the Lord's Supper fully established as the central act of Christian worship. Chapter xiii. is the beautiful and well-known chapter, every sentence of which should be treasured, on Charity or Christian Love, which the Apostle values as superior even to faith and hope.

The fifteenth chapter contains a most important statement of the Gospel of the Resurrection, which opens with a list of the Risen Lord's appearances, closing with the appearance to the writer on the road to Damascus. This chapter from the thirty-fifth verse contains a great argument nobly expressed in stately words for the

Resurrection of the Christian as the necessary consequence of the Resurrection of Christ.

In the second Epistle, which was perhaps written from Philippi, the Apostle returns to the subject of the Resurrection, and the spiritual body, which in the first Epistle was contrasted with the heavenly body, becomes the heavenly house contrasted with the earthly. He had at this time to deal with a kind of mutiny in the Church at Corinth which had been fomented by Judaizing emissaries. In this Epistle, even more than in the former Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul maintains that he is an Apostle equal to the chiefest of the twelve.

The eleventh and twelfth chapters contain a grand apology for the Apostle's own life.

The Epistle to the Galatians was called forth by the attempt of certain Judaizing teachers who had followed in St. Paul's steps to persuade the Gentiles that they must keep the Jewish ceremonial law and be circumcised. St. Paul dealt with this with great plainness of speech. 'Behold, I Paul say unto you, If ye receive circumcision Christ will profit you nothing' (Galatians v. verse 2). In the earlier part of the Epistle he gives a most valuable sketch of part of his own life and of the attitude of the chief Apostles towards him.

This Epistle was probably written after the second Epistle to the Corinthians, and before the Epistle to the Romans, either from Macedonia or Corinth. The Epistle to the Romans deals with the question of Judaism and the Law, that is, the relations of Christianity and the old Jewish religion; but being addressed to a Church which Paul had not yet visited, it deals with the question in a more detailed and more conciliatory way. The vehemence of the personal appeals to the Galatians in the Epistle to them is changed to a large and luminous exposition of the Gospel truth. This Epistle is rather a profound treatise on its subject than a personal letter, and, relying on its central doctrine of justification by faith, has the calm of conscious victory.

Perhaps the noblest of many noble chapters in the Epistle to the Romans are the eighth and twelfth chapters, both of which if space permitted would be quoted in full, but we can only give here the last verses of the eighth chapter, verses 35-38:

'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved

us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

The third group of Epistles may be called the Epistles of the first captivity, and were written during the first mild imprisonment about 61 to 62 A.D. The Epistle to the Philippians should stand first in point of time in this group. This Epistle arose out of the visit of Epaphroditus, an elder of the Church at Philippi, who had come up with a contribution in money from the Church for the help of their beloved teacher. We shall probably be not far wrong in attributing to the influence of that good, generous, and wealthy woman, Lydia, Paul's first convert in Philippi, some of the tender thoughtfulness and liberality of the Philippians. It will be remembered that Lydia, after she and her household were baptized, had insisted on making her house the home of Paul and his company, and after the imprisonment of Paul and Silas at Philippi, they were again received in her house. As the Lord Jesus had been ministered to on earth by devoted women, so had his Apostle been ministered to by Lydia and by the mother of Rufus, the wife of Simon of Cyrene, of whom he spoke affectionately as one who had given him the care of a mother and won from him the affection of a son. Paul had the joy of having Timothy with him at this time, and that, no doubt, added to the warmth of the spirit of rejoicing and gratitude that pervades the whole Epistle. Though written by a prisoner, the letter breathes a peaceful and happy confidence which is the final fruit of a consecrated life. This finds expression in such exhortations as these:

'Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation (forbearance or gentleness) be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful nor nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things' (Philippians iv. verses 4-8).

The note of thanksgiving with which the Epistle begins continues

to the end. It is a letter full of sweetness and light, for the Philipian Church was the one Church that really satisfied the Apostle's ideal of what a Church should be. The other Epistles in this group, Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon, stand together as written late in the first imprisonment, probably in the year 62 A.D. Colosse, an ancient and at that time decaying city of Phrygia, was situated on the river Lycus, ten or eleven miles from Laodicea, and a little further from Hierapolis. Epaphras, a Christian missionary of Colosse, had visited St. Paul at Rome, and made known to him the difficulties of the Christian Church in that place. These difficulties, not yet sufficiently developed to be called a heresy, apparently sprang chiefly from Judaizing teaching, complicated by the kind of religious speculation to which the Phrygian mind was prone. The report of Epaphras drew forth the Epistle from the Apostle.

'Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ. Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up his fleshy mind, and not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God' (Colossians ii. verses 16-19).

The method with which St. Paul dealt with this evil which he held to be essentially a separation between the believer and his Lord was to set before the Colossians a true conception of the Person and the work of Christ considered in relation to the universe, and also in relation to the Church.

'Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; and, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblamable and unreprouvable in his sight: if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not

moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister' (Colossians i. verses 15-23).

All the Colossians' consciousness of their need of assistance to attain to fuller wisdom and knowledge was (the Apostle points out) perfectly met in Christ Jesus the Lord, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge' (Colossians ii. verse 3).

'Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power' (Colossians ii. verses 8-10).

We also learn that some at least of St. Paul's letters to the Churches were intended to be read not only in the Church to which they were sent, but in other Churches:

'And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea' (Colossians iv. verse 16).

The words 'The salutation by the hand of me Paul' remind us that owing to St. Paul's ill-health his letters were written by an amanuensis at the dictation of the Apostle. Onesimus, the faithful and beloved brother, who, with Tychicus, carried Paul's message to the Colossians, was the principal subject of Paul's next letter, the letter to Philemon. This is the shortest and slightest of all St. Paul's letters and is the sole specimen we possess of the Apostle's private correspondence with his personal friends. The tenderness, tact, and delicacy which the Apostle displays in dealing with a difficult situation, give the letter unique interest as a trustworthy revelation of character.

Philemon was an intimate friend of St. Paul, 'our dearly beloved, and fellow-labourer' (verse 1), and apparently one whom he had led to Christ.

'I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it: albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me thine own self besides' (verse 16).

It is evident from the references to his hospitality to the saints that Philemon was a man of means. The purpose of the letter was to entreat him to receive back a runaway slave whom Paul had won to Christ; to receive him, not as a slave, but as a brother beloved, that is, a member of the Christian brotherhood. Onesimus, the slave, had fled to Rome, where he had been converted by Paul, who was now sending him home to his master. The Apostle shows a joyous confidence in Philemon's generous reception of his slave,

basing his request not only on Philemon's friendship for himself, but on the mutual brotherhood of master and slave in Christ. He does not ask him directly to emancipate his slave, but he is certain that Philemon will do more than he asks him to do.

'Knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say' (verse 21). This delicate persuasiveness practically leaves Philemon no other alternative than to free his brother in Christ. Onesimus appears to have robbed his master, and for this and running away would have been severely punished by a heathen master had he fallen into his hands. Society in the Roman Empire was based on slavery. Slaves were regarded as mere chattels; they were also absolutely in a master's power to be flogged to put to death at his will. Christianity dealt with the evil of slavery gradually, not by direct attack, but by positive teaching of the brotherhood of all in Christ, and depended on the influence of this truth, when realised, to make slavery impossible.

The remaining Epistle of this group, the Epistle to the Ephesians, is the Epistle of the great ideal of the Universal or Catholic Church, the society predestined to unite all mankind in one purpose and one spirit, in living one life, the Christ-life, that is, the life of God. The plea for unity in this Epistle is really based on our Lord's prayer for the unity of His Church, especially at the passage recorded in St. John xviii. verses 18-23: 'As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth ('in truth,' R.V.). Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.'

In this Epistle, as in the Lord's great prayer for the unity of the Church in the passage quoted above, the main teaching is that the union of Christians with Christ implies the union with one another. The Epistle as a whole is rather a great inspired revelation to the Universal Church than a mere letter to an individual Church. Still, it also contains personal appeals to the Ephesians: 'Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light' (Ephesians v. verse 8).

It seeks to win Christians to live the higher life by the picture

of the Church in its perfection, which the Apostle draws with a hand, as it were, guided from heaven. The appeal to the whole Church to live the life of Christian unity is admirably put in Ephesians iv. verses 1-16: 'I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave some ('to be,' R.V.) apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in ('attain unto,' R.V.) the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and for, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.'

As in the Epistle to the Colossians, so here the highest speculative truths are shown to involve the humblest practical morals of everyday life.

The fourth and last group of St. Paul's Epistles, best known as the Pastoral Epistles, consists of the first Epistle to Timothy, the Epistle to Titus, and the last Epistle we possess, written near the close of St. Paul's life, the second Epistle to Timothy. The first Epistle to Timothy and the Epistle to Titus were apparently written after the Apostle's release from his first imprisonment at Rome. If his first imprisonment at Rome ended in the year 63 A.D., the visitation of the churches he had founded in Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Greece, the missionary work in Crete with Titus referred

to in the Epistle to Titus, the possible missionary visit to Spain (referred to by St. Clement and the Muratorian Canon), would fill the years before the second imprisonment and trial, which may be dated about 67 A.D.

But in any case these Pastoral Epistles contain genuine accounts of St. Paul's movements after his first imprisonment at Rome. When the first Epistle to Timothy was written, Paul had been with him a short time before. The Epistle consists of practical counsels to Timothy, who had remained at Ephesus as the Apostle's delegate in charge of the work there. The main purpose is summed up in chapter iii. verses 14, 15:

'These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.'

The following verse contains an early Christian hymn: 'And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: He who was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, received up into glory' (R.V.).

The great fundamental thoughts of the salvation of all mankind, and of the consecration of all creation, run through all the Epistle, and dictate the rules of conduct enjoined. The passages which deal with the organization of the Church are particularly interesting.

In Timothy's position as St. Paul's delegate is to be found the germ from which the Episcopate developed. While this Epistle witnesses to the delegation of Apostolic authority even more fully than do Titus and 2 Timothy, it is also important as a first handbook of Church discipline.

The Epistle to Titus was probably written, like the first Epistle to Timothy, during St. Paul's missionary visitation to the Churches he had founded in Greece and Macedonia, after his first imprisonment in Rome. It is evidently a private letter, not intended to be read in the churches. St. Paul and Titus had been in Crete together, and Titus had been left by the Apostle to act as his delegate to appoint presbyters, and to complete the organization of the Churches. The letter gives a picture of the development of the ministry in the early Church, and shows how the beauty of the well-ordered religious and family life of the Christians recommended itself to those who were outside in the Roman Empire. As in others of St. Paul's Epistles, the humblest duties are connected with the highest hopes.

'Exhort servants (slaves) to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people ('a people for his own possession,' R.V.), zealous of good works' (Titus ii. verses 9-14).

The second Epistle to Timothy is clearly of later date than the other two Pastoral Epistles: St. Paul when he wrote had been some time in a Roman prison. A short time before he wrote this Epistle he had been travelling in Asia Minor and Greece, and he had been deserted in his bonds by all the brethren in Asia. Demas had forsaken him, 'having loved the present world.' No one but Luke remained with him. Onesiphorus indeed had searched him out in his lonely prison and comforted him, but he longed for his beloved child Timothy: 'Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me' (2 Timothy iv. verse 9).

'Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us' (2 Timothy i. verses 13, 14).

We have here a venerable Christian's counsel full of the cautious wisdom of old age. The fiery spirit that smote Judaizers in certain earlier Epistles is softened and mellowed by years. The letter reveals the tenderness of the Apostle's fatherly heart towards his beloved child Timothy, and the sweetness and affectionateness of the latter towards the Apostle, together with a certain timidity in the discharge of the duties of his office.

'I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day; greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy; when I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also. Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of

power, and of love, and of a sound mind' (2 Timothy i. verses 3-7).

This letter is particularly interesting as supplying the chief evidence concerning Paul's life after the close of the Acts of the Apostles. It mentions the second imprisonment and the second trial, as well as the missionary work in the interval between the two imprisonments. Its portrait of the aged Christian minister unconsciously given by its writer is even more interesting than the portrait of the ideal minister which he sets before Timothy.

One of the finest passages in the Epistle shows us the dauntless old missionary in sight of martyrdom which in the second imprisonment he knew would be the end of his earthly life.

'For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight (*i.e.*, run the good race), I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a ('the,' R.V.) crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing' (2 Timothy iv. verses 6-8).

Though the authorship and the date of the Epistle to the Hebrews cannot be fixed with any certainty, it is unquestionably one of the great writings of the New Testament. The author may possibly be St. Paul's friend and fellow-labourer Apollos, the learned Jew of Alexandria, for it shows a remarkable knowledge of Philo and of the Book of Wisdom, but can hardly be St. Paul, for the style and treatment are altogether unlike his. If the date cannot be exactly determined, the contents at any rate make it fairly certain that it was written before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Those who accept the conjecture of the authorship of Apollos might assume with some probability that it was addressed to Jewish Christians in the Church at Ephesus. It is at least certain that it was addressed to Jews who had accepted Christianity, and were in danger of relapsing into Judaism. The method of the writer of the Epistle adopted to help the Jewish Christians wavering under the pressure of persecution to remain true to Christ was to offer them a very full comparison of the two religions, Christianity and Judaism. The opening sentence introduces the main argument by stating that the gradual and imperfect revelation of the past has been completed in the final and perfect revelation in Jesus Christ.

'God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by

whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high' (Hebrews i. verses 1-3).

First the writer shows the superiority of Christ to the Prophets, then His superiority to the angels, then His superiority to Moses, then to Aaron, then he compares Christ's priesthood to what he considers a far simpler and profounder priesthood than the Levitical, the primitive priesthood of Melchisedec, then he goes on to show the superiority of Christ, our High Priest, to the high priest of Judaism and the superiority of the New Covenant to the Old. This argument reaches its highest point in chapter ix. verses 23-26:

'It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.'

Thus the writer of the Epistle succeeds in proving very fully that, to abandon Christianity and return to Judaism, would be to exchange the substance for the shadow. Christianity, by its great High Priest, gave that open access into the very Presence of God, of which Judaism could merely supply the symbolical representation.

'Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works' (Hebrews x. verses 19-24).

All the comparisons and arguments with which the Epistle disposes of the claims of Judaism are based on the firm conviction of the writer that Christianity is the supreme and final religion, the only religion that has solved the problem of reuniting man with God. This high conception of Christianity is based on a high

conception of Christ's Person as a Divine Being, one with God, and Himself pre-existent and the Maker of the Universe.

Peculiar to this author is the conception of earth as a place of shadows and heaven as a place of actual realities.

The remaining chapters are chiefly occupied with the glowing panegyric of the heroes of faith which was intended to show the Jewish Christians that, as Christians, they were closely linked to the old patriarchs and prophets, as possessors of what these had longed for and looked for. The inferiority of Judaism to Christianity stood confessed in the opinion of the author of the Epistle in the veil that separated worshippers from the most holy place. No such separation exists for the Christian. The most holy place is the open presence of God, into which Jesus has entered for us as our forerunner; that is, one who goes on in advance to bring others after him.

'Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec' (Hebrews vi. verses 19, 20).

The hope of the Christian rests in the fact that Christ is his forerunner and is carrying out His promise: 'I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also' (St. John xiv. verses 2, 3).

We come now to the seven Catholic Epistles, one of which bears the name of St. James, two of St. Peter, three of St. John, and one of St. Jude. There are differences of opinion as to why the term Catholic has been given to the Epistles of this group. Probably Catholic had in the beginning the sense of General; that is to say, Catholic Epistles meant Circular or Encyclical Epistles. James, 1 and 2 Peter, Jude, and 1 John are addressed to wide circles of Christians in different lands, while 2 John, though its address to an individual is probable, was early taken to be addressed to the Church at large under the title of 'the Elect Lady;' and 3 John, though actually addressed to an individual, would naturally follow 1 and 2 John. These Epistles were first called Catholic in the Eastern Church, and from the sixth century Canonical in the Western. The first of this group is the general Epistle of St. James, which was addressed 'to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad' (James i. verse 1)—that is, to the Jewish Christians of the Dispersion—urging them to the patient endurance of their trials, and warning them with practical piety against many faults of conduct as well as some errors of doctrine. St. James was one of the Lord's

brethren, but was not one of the twelve Apostles; indeed, he was not even a believer till after the Resurrection. His conversion may probably be dated from the appearance of the Risen Lord to him, recorded in 1 Corinthians xv. verse 7. After the Ascension, he remained in Jerusalem in the company of the Apostles, waiting for the descent of the Holy Spirit, and ten years later we find him the head of the Church at Jerusalem, and in another fourteen years later ranked among the Pillar Apostles, and in front of St. Peter and St. John. 'And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision' (Galatians ii. verse 9).

On St. Paul's second visit to Jerusalem, St. James was president of the Council held to consider what were to be the terms of Gentile membership in the Christian Church. It was he who carried the momentous resolution not to trouble with the whole ceremonial law those Gentiles who turned to God. Again, when St. Paul returned from his third missionary journey, James, at the head of the elders of the Church, received him. It is interesting to observe that the speech recorded in Acts xv. at the second visit of St. Paul to Jerusalem, and the circular sent to Antioch by Judas and Silas declaring the terms of Gentile membership fixed by the Council, bear a striking likeness in their language to the language of this Epistle. Though the ordinary tongue used in the home at Nazareth was probably Aramaic, yet all round the Lake of Galilee Greek was in common use, and St. James would have required enough Greek there to enable him to write the Epistle. The mark of our Lord's influence on St. James is to be found in the latter's large knowledge and continual use of the teaching of Jesus, especially of that teaching known to us as the Sermon on the Mount. The coincidences with our Lord's teaching reveal far deeper knowledge than if they were mere quotations, for they are the reproduction, in other words, of ideas and thoughts which the disciple had fully assimilated from his Master. The date of the Epistle is probably A.D. 51, or even earlier, taking that as the date of the Apostolic Council; for if the Epistle were later, its author would have said something about the decision of the Council as to the admission of Gentile converts to the Church. St. James was celebrated for his holy life. He was an ascetic as well as a man of deep piety. His great reputation for practical righteousness based on prayerfulness, gave him particular fitness to be head—Bishop, as we should call it—of the Jewish Christians and of the Church

at Jerusalem; which he was in fact if not in name. He was called 'Obliam,' the bulwark or defence of the people, and his Epistle deals with the dangers of wealth and the duty of brotherhood among Christians of all nations in a way that explains that title. Hegesippus is quoted by Eusebius as saying of him, 'His knees became hard like a camel's because he was always kneeling in the Temple, asking forgiveness for the people.' He was known as James the Just, or the Righteous One, and Clement of Alexandria states that Peter and James and John (the sons of Zebedee) elected James the Just to be Bishop of Jerusalem.

The contents of his Epistle reflect and justify the character he bore. He condemned faith without works as a dead thing, not meaning to depreciate faith, but meaning to estimate that faith as valueless which has no effect on the conduct. Conduct was the fruit which Christ's religion was to produce in the members of his Church, and St. James drew attention to definite faults of conduct, and dealt specially with the dangers that come from the misuse of the tongue and from the misuse of riches. Christianity is a life, and St. James' warnings are by no means obsolete in the twentieth century.

The first Epistle of Peter was written apparently by one who had studied the Epistle of James. It was addressed to members of the Christian Church in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, that is, in what we call Asia Minor. The Christians to whom St. Peter writes were some of them converts from Judaism, but most of them from heathenism. They were evidently exposed to persecution, but hardly, one thinks, to persecution directed by the State. 'Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. . . . Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king' (1 Peter ii. verses 13, 15, 17).

Had the great persecution of the Christians by Nero begun, it is inconceivable that the writer of the Epistle would have used such language concerning the Emperor and concerning the Provincial Governors 'sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.' Plainly the Neronian persecution had not yet begun. The Christians nevertheless had to face the ill-will and ill-usage of their heathen neighbours. 'Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, in-

asmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet, if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf' (1 Peter iv. verses 12-16).

From this passage it is apparent that the sufferings at this time largely consisted of reproach and slander from Gentiles who, in the language of 1 Peter iv. verse 4, 'think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you.'

Many other passages, such as 1 Peter iii. 9 and iii. 16, are not compatible with a State-directed persecution, while quite in keeping with a campaign of slander and insult to which their silent condemnation of heathen revelry and licentiousness by holding aloof from it often exposed the Christians. Even in the days when St. Paul with good reason regarded the Empire as the protector of the Church from Jewish and heathen lawlessness, he and Barnabas assured their converts in Asia Minor 'that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God' (Acts xiv. verse 22). There is good reason to believe that St. Peter wrote from Rome, to which he had been summoned by St. Paul during his first imprisonment, in order that the Apostle of the Circumcision, Peter, might join with the Apostle of the Gentiles, Paul, in teaching the great Church of Rome the necessary lesson of Christian unity. If St. Peter wrote soon after St. Paul's release on his acquittal after a trial before the Emperor, his language about the civil power, the Emperor and the Provincial Governors, is perfectly natural. The purpose of St. Peter's letter, which was sent by Silvanus, who was probably St. Paul's messenger, seems to have been to give a lesson in Christian unity to the Churches in Asia Minor, which could not fail to be impressed by a letter from the Apostle of the Circumcision, brought by a companion and friend of the Apostle of the Uncircumcision, St. Paul. Supposing that Silvanus was going as St. Paul's delegate to endeavour to unify the Churches in Asia Minor, the fact of being a bearer of a letter from St. Peter would greatly assist his purpose. We find, as we would expect in a letter by St. Peter, plain notes of an eye-witness of the life of our Lord, such as 1 Peter v. verse 1: 'The elders which are among you I exhort, whom am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed.'

In this he claims authority as an eye-witness of the sufferings of Christ. An instance of this witness-bearing is to be found in 1 Peter ii. verse 23: 'Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.'

Apparently this is a memory of what the writer saw at the informal and brutal trial of our Lord in the High Priest's palace. So in 1 Peter v. verse 5: 'Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble,' the words 'clothed with humility' are a remembrance of the scene in the Upper Room when the Lord girded Himself with a towel and washed Peter's and the other disciples' feet. There are, in this Epistle, many memories of the Lord's teaching as recorded in the first three Gospels, and some of the teaching recorded in St. John. It is worth noting that the whole of St. Paul's Epistles supply a list of coincidences with the Gospels less considerable in number than this short first Epistle of St. Peter. To St. Peter the Christian Church's universal brotherhood and the duty of brotherly love and unity come from the common relationship of Christians to the one Father in Heaven. Unity in the face of heathen hostility is the attitude enjoined. Almost every exhortation in this Epistle is connected with our Lord's example, or with His Passion or with His Crucifixion, or with His Resurrection, or with His Return. In this Epistle too is to be found the only direct statement of that most mysterious part of our Lord's redemptive work, which is referred to in our Creed, in the words 'He descended into hell.' The first of the two passages is found in 1 Peter iii. verses 18-20: 'For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.' This passage deals with the case of those who died in the great judgment of the Flood, the typical judgment of antiquity, selected as representative rebels against God, and the statement is perfectly plain that the Saviour of the world preached or proclaimed the Gospel to these disobedient spirits in prison in the Unseen World.

With this passage is to be taken 1 Peter iv. verse 6: 'For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according

to God in the spirit.' The purpose of the preaching is stated in this second passage to be that the dead though judged already after the pattern of men in the flesh (*i.e.* the earthly life) may live after the pattern of God in the spirit. These passages undoubtedly seem to give a vast extension to our view of our Lord's redemptive work. His journey to the Unseen World, and His proclamation of the Gospel to the spirits in prison, give a nobler and more universal range to the Redeemer's victory. It is remarkable to that St. Peter alone among the Twelve refers to the descent into Hell in His sermon on the Day of Pentecost. If it be asked, Whence did Peter derive this knowledge of the preaching to the dead in the Unseen World? the reasonable answer is: From the one possible source, the Divine Preacher Himself, the Lord Jesus during the forty days after His Resurrection, before the Ascension.

These are only a few of the passages which deserve careful study in this beautiful Epistle.

The second Epistle of St. Peter differs in style from the first. Its contents are less valuable, and its authenticity is less strongly supported by internal and external evidence. The writer refers in the first chapter to two experiences of his life as one of the inner circle of the disciples during our Lord's earthly ministry. They both occur in the first chapter.

In 2 Peter i. verse 14: 'Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me,' he refers to what our Lord had told him concerning his death on an occasion which is recorded in St. John xxi. verses 18, 19: 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God.'

The other passage is the interesting reference to the Transfiguration, in verses 16, 17, and 18: 'For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but where eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.'

The Epistle was evidently written in Peter's old age, and when long delay had shaken the confidence of many in a visible and immediate return. The main purpose of the Epistle was to warn the

Christians to whom it was addressed against the false teachers, whose doctrinal errors issued in immoral life.

In support of the old view of the authorship of the two Epistles of Peter, it may be said that there are a large number of features of resemblance between the Epistles, while there are of course a great many differences of style. A considerable number of coincidences have been noticed between Peter's speeches recorded in the Acts of the Apostles and this Epistle. The manifest differences of style between the two Epistles may perhaps be accounted for by the fact (which we know from Papias) that Peter used an interpreter, and may possibly have had the service of a different interpreter for each Epistle to translate what he had to say into Greek. But when all is said in admission of the inferiority of the second Epistle to the first, it must be added that, at any rate in the Authorised Version, there are passages that are not wanting in dignity and even in grandeur. For instance (2 Peter i. verses 19-21): 'We have also a more sure word of prophecy: whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.'

And again: 'Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such thing, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. . . . Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen' (2 Peter iii. verses 11-14, 17, 18).

The three Epistles of St. John were in use in the Church at an early date, the first Epistle by the middle of the second century. That the Epistles were written by the author of the Gospel is manifest on the internal evidence alone. The calm, transparent style, the simple way of saying deep things is the same in the Epistles as in the Gospel. The letters, like the Gospel, were probably writ-

ten at Ephesus, where St. John's later years were passed in organizing the Churches in Asia, till his death at a great age in the days of Trajan.

The first Epistle begins with a characteristic impersonal reference to the fact of John's intimacy with the Risen Lord, whom he recognises as the manifestation of that eternal life which is with the Father. His object in addressing his readers was that they might have fellowship with him and those Christians with whom he classes himself, and so share his fellowship with God. His message is briefly this: 'God is light, and in him is no darkness at all' (1 John i. verse 5). From this it follows that to walk in the light is necessary for this fellowship with God. On this walking in the light depends also our fellowship with our fellow-men and our cleansing from sin by the blood of Christ. If we claim to have no sin, we deceive ourselves; but if we confess our sins, we are forgiven. The aim of St. John's Epistle is to instruct his converts—'my little children,' as he affectionately calls them (1 John ii. verse 1)—not to sin, but he adds, conscious that sin will not be altogether avoided: 'And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our only, but also for the sins of the whole world' (1 John ii. verses 1, 2). Here it may be noticed that the word 'Paraclete' (advocate) is in St. John's Gospel employed to signify the Holy Ghost, but here used directly of our Lord.

From fellowship with God the thought passes on to knowledge of God, the essential of which is simple obedience to God's commandments. He warns his readers against false prophets, on whom from time to time he flashes his righteous wrath, returning again and again to his favourite subjects—the keeping of the law of love and the keeping of the law of righteousness. From the former we may learn to anticipate the verdict of the Day of Judgment.

'We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death' (1 John iii. verse 14).

To walk in the light he sees it is necessary above all things to love God and also to love our brethren, by which he means the members of the Christian Church.

'Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his

Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us' (1 John iv. verses 7-12).

In this Epistle God is light: 'God is light, and in him is no darkness at all' (1 John i. verse 5); 'God is love' (1 John iv. verse 8)—profound thoughts conveyed in the very simplest language. Christ is the Son, the Only Begotten, who was with the Father in the beginning, before He was born in a human form into the world. The powers of evil are described by St. John in their widest and most comprehensive form as The World, in which are to be found many evil spirits, chiefest of which is the Spirit called Antichrist. Antichrist in the Epistles is not an enemy which assails the Church from without, but a false teacher within the Church that denies essential doctrines (1 John ii. verse 18): 'And as ye have heard that antichrist will come, so now there are many antichrists.' So also 1 John iv. verse 3. 'Eternal life' in this Epistle is the life of the Father revealed in Christ. It is a new kind of life, a life of goodness begun here, perfected hereafter. This great idea of eternal life, common to the Epistle and the Gospel, occurs relatively to its length more frequently in the Epistle, where it is found six times to seventeen times in the Gospel. This eternal life is present here and now, and it is ours only in union with Christ.

'And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life' (1 John v. verses 11, 12). Those who, as sons of God, have eternal life here have a yet brighter destiny to look forward to.

'Beloved, now we are the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is' (1 John iii. verse 2).

The second Epistle of St. John, like the first, was probably written from Ephesus, and is addressed to the Elect Lady, which is thought by some to be a figurative expression for an individual Church and by others for the Church generally.

If it be addressed to a Church it is probably one of the Asian Churches, but the private and personal character of the second Epistle, and the fact that the third is addressed to an individual by name, rather favour the idea that the Epistle was addressed to a Christian lady, of whom we know nothing except what we read in this Epistle. We gather from its contents that it was written as a warning against certain Docetic teachers of the Gnostic type already condemned in the first Epistle. The second letter does not

enter at once on its subject as does the first letter, but begins with courteous personal greetings and personal commendation, such as we are accustomed to in St. Paul's Epistles. St. John goes on with affectionate tenderness to insist on the keeping of the commandment, 'Not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another' (2 John, verse 5). It may be noted that the very words in which this commandment was given by our Lord are reproduced here: 'A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another' (St. John xiii. verse 34). The same idea and even the same words were evidently in the mind of the Apostle. The letter goes on to condemn certain deceivers who confessed not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, that is, in the full reality of human nature. These heretics whose heresy was that of Cerinthus, he identifies with Antichrist. He reminds his readers that fellowship with God can only be had by fidelity to the teaching of Christ. Then with that sternness against evil which belongs to intense devotion to the truth, he gives the order, 'If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds' (2 John, verses 10-11). The Epistle closes with a salutation to the Lady to whom the letter is addressed from the children of her elect sister.

The third Epistle is as short as the second and is certainly addressed to an individual, 'the well-beloved Gaius' (3 John, verse 1). As for the place and date, it was probably written, like the other Epistles, at Ephesus, after the Gospel, towards the close of St. John's long life. We know nothing about Gaius, except what comes out in the letter, for we can hardly identify him with Gaius of Corinth, Paul's host, because both bore the same name, and were distinguished for hospitality. St. John's intention of seeing Gaius shortly face to face and telling him the many things he had to communicate, but was unwilling to commit to paper, suggests that this visit may have been part of the work of Apostolic visitation, which we know that he carried out in the neighbourhood of Ephesus. Clement is quoted by Eusebius to the effect that John, after the death of Domitian (96 A.D.) 'coming from the isle of Patmos to Ephesus, went also when called to the neighbouring regions of the Gentiles, in some to appoint bishops, in some to institute entire new churches, in others to appoint to the ministry some one of those that were pointed out by the Holy Ghost.' The Epistle appears to have been written in the following circumstances. Certain brethren, strangers, who were travelling through the Churches,

most probably as missionaries, had come to St. John and had reported to him the hospitable treatment, and the brotherly love Gaius had shown to them. St. John praised him warmly for this, and told him how well these brethren deserved a brotherly reception. Hospitality was an essential of those early days of Christianity. Neither the travelling preachers nor the travellers who came with letters could be allowed to stay at heathen inns, where the morals were even worse than the accommodation. 'Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles' (3 John, verse 7). But the purpose of the letter was not only to express the aged Apostle's pleasure at the well-doing of Gaius, but also to express his indignation at the misconduct of a certain Diotrephes. This man not only refused to receive the brethren, but had forbidden others to receive them. A pushing and ambitious man, he had disowned the authority of the Apostle. 'Wherefore,' writes St. John, 'if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the Church' (3 John, verse 10). The warning that follows is a specimen of that impressive Hebrew parallelism which characterises St. John's style: 'Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God' (3 John, verse 11). The letter, after bearing witness to the worth of one Demetrius, in language which is as characteristic of St. John as the rest of the composition, ends with a benediction and salutation. This letter gives an interesting glimpse of the life of the Christian Churches that were under the oversight of the last of the Apostles, probably about the close of the first century. It was just at the point of transition from the Apostolic age when the ministry of travelling preachers had not yet completely given way to the localised, fully organized ministry. It has been conjectured that Diotrephes was the first aggressive champion of the new order against the old, and certainly he seems to have regarded the brethren whom Gaius had received so lovingly rather as intruders to be cast out than as fellow-Christians to be welcomed.

The Epistle of St. Jude was written by the Lord's brother Jude or Judas. Like the rest of the Lord's brethren, he did not believe in Christ till after the Resurrection. In the first verse of the Epistle he styles himself a 'bondservant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James.' The place in which it was written was probably Jerusalem, where the brethren of the Lord would naturally hold a place of some influence, owing to the long headship of St. James. From the

internal evidence of the letter, it was clearly addressed to a Church composed of Gentiles or mainly of Gentiles. St. Jude writes about 'our common salvation' (Jude, verse 3) as a Jewish Christian to Gentile Christians, and the abuses condemned are very much the same as St. Paul found in the Church at Corinth. They came from the presence in the Christian brotherhood of Gentiles who had not abandoned the immorality and irreverence of their old life. The danger was not false doctrine, but vicious example. St. Jude therefore feels forced to call upon them to contend earnestly for the faith against the depravity of the men who had crept in among them, and by their misconduct were practically denying the only Master and Lord. In support of his case he gives instances of the destruction that comes as God's judgment on fleshly lusts. Sodom and Gomorrah are among the instances given. In addition to their viciousness, these lawless brethren refused to submit to authority, and spoke evil of the rulers of the Church. They did not hesitate to bring their greed and irreverence to the most sacred service, the love-feast and the Eucharist which followed. 'These are spots ('hidden rocks,' R.V.) in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you' (Jude, verse 12).

On the attitude that should be observed by the Church towards these depraved men, he gives some eminently judicious and charitable advice. They are not to treat them all alike. On the least guilty they are to have compassion, 'on some have mercy, who are in doubt, some save, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh' (Jude, verses 22, 23, R.V.). The Epistle ends with an ascription which is not easy to surpass: 'Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen' (Jude, verses 24, 25).

As to the date of the Epistle, there is so much knowledge of St. Paul's Epistles shown that it may be assigned to a period within a year or two of the Pastoral Epistles and 1 Peter.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE REVELATION OF S.T JOHN THE DIVINE.

THIS Book, which stands last in the Bible, is generally considered the most obscure and difficult of all the Books, but the obscurity and difficulty, though real, have never been able to hide from Christians its main message and its main purpose. The message is: the Coming of Christ to Churches and Nations, as well as to individuals; and the purpose is: to prepare them by repentance and faith to be ready and rejoice to receive Him at His coming. The Revelation is really a continuation of the Gospels. As the Gospels describe our Lord's earthly life and His mighty works in Galilee and Judæa, so the Revelation describes His heavenly life in His Church and the spiritual miracles by which He aids it in its struggle with evil. The description of this heavenly life of the Risen Lord is made by means of an elaborate symbolism which is designed to enable the Churches to feel the reality of the Lord's Coming.

The Book is largely composed of Visions of the Coming, and though the details of these Visions may not always be possible to explain, yet enough is within the reach of the intelligent reader to enable him to receive the essential part of the Revelation or Unveiling of the Divine Spirit of the Ascended Lord.

While not attempting a detailed commentary on the contents, our endeavour will be to make the Book easier to understand. The superscription of the Book, which does not occur in the earlier manuscripts, is the Revelation of St. John the Divine, 'the Divine' being in the original, 'the theologian,' a title which well describes the author of the loftiest theology in the Bible, that of the Gospel which bears his name, as well as of this Book and of the Epistles.

A better superscription can be found in the words of the first verse. That verse states that it is the Revelation of Christ, not of John, but made through John, 'and he sent and signified it' (that is, showed it by means of signs) 'by his angel to his servant John.' What was to be shown were the 'things which must shortly come to pass' (verse 1). And thus the Book itself guides us to seek in the circumstances and history of the time, the clue to its meaning.

The Book had primarily to be understood by the generation of Christians to whom it was addressed, and readers to-day must

try to put themselves in the place of the first readers; and then, understanding the meaning as they understood it, as far as this is possible, go on to apply it to what is analogous in their own circumstances and times. The Unveiling of Christ in this Book is intended to be realised as being as true to-day as when it was written.

The Revelation was given in the Island of Patmos, a small volcanic island off the coast of Asia Minor, to which St. John was banished, as a Christian; no doubt on account of his influential position among the Churches of the mainland. Such a banishment for religion regarded as dangerous by the Emperor involved hard labour in fetters under a taskmaster's whip. Life under such conditions was a living entombment, and certainly entitled the Apostle to describe himself in writing to the persecuted Churches as 'your companion in tribulation.' Some connection between the imagery of some of the visions and the earthquakes and volcanic disturbances of that region may be found in such passages as this: 'And as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea' (Revelation viii. verse 8).

It may be remembered that there had been an eruption of the volcano of Santorin, an island not far off, not many years before, and Laodicea had been destroyed by earthquakes as recently as 60 A.D.

It was on the Lord's Day, that is, the first day of the week, already consecrated and so named from the Lord's Resurrection, that the Vision of Christ came to the prisoner of Patmos, and the Divine Voice, speaking in the depths of his soul, gave him the messages to send to the Churches of Asia, addressed to the seven principal Churches, as representatives of all. The Vision of Christ is described in language taken from the Old Testament books of Daniel and Ezekiel.

The mind of St. John was so steeped in Old Testament prophecy that he used the old language to express his own new thoughts. In this description of Christ (chapter i. verses 12-17) the portraits of the Son of Man and of the Ancient of Days in Daniel vii., and the portrait of the Angel in Daniel x., have been freely used to describe an independent vision; the details taken from the Ancient of Days being an impressive assertion of the Lord's Divinity. The Divine figure is clothed with a garment down to the feet, a garment denoting Kingly and Priestly dignity. His head and His hair are described as white, not with age, but with the intensity of outflowing light. His eyes are as a flame of fire with burning indignation against evil, embodying the meaning of 'our God is a consuming fire'

(Hebrews xii. verse 29). 'His feet were like unto burnished brass as if it had been refined in a furnace, and his voice as the voice of many waters' (R.V.). This description is taken from Daniel, except that for the description of the voice a simile from Ezekiel (xliii. verse 2) is substituted. 'Out of his mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword' (verse 16): 'the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God' (Ephesians vi. verse 17). The description concludes with these words: 'And his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.' The sun, the light and the life of all on the earth, is the best comparison that could be found for 'the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.'

The whole description brings to our minds an event of which St. John had been an eye-witness, the Transfiguration.

Before the feet of the Risen Lord the Apostle fell in worshipping adoration. Tenderly the Christ laid His right hand on the disciple who had lain on his Master's breast at the Last Supper, and said: 'Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the Living One: and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the Keys of Death and of Hades'—the Unseen World (R.V., Revelation i. verses 17, 18).

With reference to this, we may remember the Lord's words on the Cross to the dying thief beside Him: 'To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.'

The Apostle is told to write to the Seven Churches. It was not that there were not many other Churches in Asia Minor, but these seven were the representative Churches and stand here for the whole province, each being the chief among a group. Seven is the number which runs through the whole Book as being the ideal, or perfect number. The Risen Lord is identified with the Spirit which speaks through St. John to the Churches: 'He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.' This is repeated in the letter to each Church. The Risen Lord Himself explains that the seven candlesticks among which he walks represent the Seven Churches, and thus, that He is ever present in the midst of His Churches.

The Churches are represented by candlesticks, as being light-bearers to mankind: 'Ye are the light of the world.' 'Let your light so shine.'

The first message or letter is to the Angel of the Church of Ephesus, that is, the ideal in heaven which is represented by the Church on earth. This Church, of which we heard in a chapter dealing with St. Paul, if founded by Priscilla and Aquila, was of St. Paul's building up, and it is pleasant to find that he had not laboured

in vain. St. Paul had fought hard against Antinomianism, a making of terms with heathenism, a turning of Christian liberty into licence, and the Church in Ephesus is praised by St. John for its attitude towards a sect holding these dangerously fashionable false opinions, the Nicolaitanes. 'Thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate' (Revelation ii. verse 6).

The name came probably from a false claim that the sect had been founded by Nicloas the deacon. Much praise is given to this Church for its patience and endurance for 'my name's sake,' but it is warned against backsliding: it is told to remember how well it began, and to return to its former position, 'thy first love.'

The next Epistle is to the Church in Smyrna. This city was very wealthy and a great trading centre, but the Church was poor in worldly goods, though rich spiritually. The Church was in danger of persecution, probably to force its members to submit to the prevalent Emperor-worship. There was a temple here to the wicked Emperor Tiberius, and the worship of such a creature might well be described as devil-worship. 'Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried' (verse 10).

The promise to the persecuted Christians is a beautiful one: 'Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life' (verse 10); or, paraphrased: 'Instead of your proud crown of buildings I will give you the victor's crown of life.' The aged Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, died a martyr, A.D. 155.

The third Epistle is to the Church in Pergamos (R.V., Pergamum). This was an ancient city, the capital of Asia in the time of Augustus. Here was the first temple built for Emperor-worship and dedicated to Augustus. Emperor-worship is treated as the chief enemy of Christ throughout the Revelation, and is identified with Satan and Antichrist, though the latter word does not occur.

Accordingly, the Epistle describes the town as the place, 'where Satan's throne ('seat,' (.V.) is,' that is the chief centre of the evil worship. The persecution had been going on some time here, and a martyr is mentioned by name: 'Antipas, my faithful martyr.' Probably the reason for this is that he was the first martyr, and died for his refusal to join in this worship. Executions of Christians ordered by the Roman Government would take place here as the capital city of the province. With all their fidelity, the Church in Pergamum had tolerated the teaching of the Nicolaitanes, and now received Christ's solemn warning to repent.

The fourth Epistle is to the Church at Thyatira, a rich and powerful commercial town in Asia. Here, as in all these Epistles, full credit is given for all well-doing of the Church addressed. After

this comes the complaint—in this case a serious one: 'Thou sufferest the woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, and she teacheth and seduceth my servants to commit fornication and eat things sacrificed to idols' (Revelation ii. verse 20).

It is evident that this woman was a definite person, and the question is, who? The description is of a woman who was a prophetess in the Christian Church, like Philip the Evangelist's four daughters, like Ammia of Philadelphia, and many other women of light and leading in the first century.

The fact is, that a great difficulty which met the early converts from Paganism is referred to here.

In the Asian cities and, indeed, all over the Empire, trade guilds existed, and were highly prized and extremely efficient. This is well known in Asia Minor from the inscriptions, and we can remember this fact at Ephesus in the account of St. Paul's work there and the hostile faction of Demetrius the silversmith.

Great advantages, both social and financial, accrued from the membership of the guild. It was a sort of club, and brought men together, and was regarded as almost essential to the business of many trades. It was a great power of union, which, however, depended on a common religion and a common sacrificial meal. Thus the bond of union was a heathen god. This involved idolatry, and the common meal was apt to degenerate into revelry, and too much wine led often to immorality. Yet such was the convenience and attractiveness of these guilds that they had not yet been condemned by the Church at Thyatira; and indeed a chief teacher in that church had championed the cause of compromise, and continued to do so only too successfully.

It had clearly not been decided there, though it had been in Ephesus, whether membership of a heathen trade guild was permissible to a Christian. This marks an early stage of Christian development, and supports an early date for the Book of the Revelation. Some time before this St. Paul had condemned such mixing in heathen social life as 'fellowship with devils,' in his first Epistle to the Corinthians (chapter x. verse 20). The 'bed' mentioned in Revelation ii. verse 22, really means a banqueting couch, and the meaning is that the scene of revelry is to become the scene of retribution.

What was the action of the Apostles as regards this difficult question? An order of 'no compromise' was the Apostolic decision, as we see here, and the toleration of the practice of Church members belonging to a heathen club was before long abandoned. Perhaps

this staunchness to principle had more to do with the ultimate victory of Christianity than appears on the surface.

The difficulty was a real one. To obey St. John meant to an artisan of Thyatira not only to lose pleasant social intercourse, but to risk loss of employment and loss of money. It is interesting to compare their difficulties then with our to-day. A somewhat analogous case to-day would be the custom of treating in public-houses to facilitate business. A working man may not only find it pleasant to meet acquaintances in public-houses, but helpful in getting employment, and not invariably leading to drunkenness. The public-house is practically his club-house; and the question is, as in the case of the trade guilds at Thyatira, whether the associations and influence of the use of the place are elevating or the reverse. A very plausible case, no doubt, was made out on the surface by 'Jezebel,' the influential woman who taught that membership in a heathen club was perfectly permissible to a Christian. But St. John vehemently condemned the practice, and denounced the bare toleration of such teaching; and the Church accepted his decision and St. Paul's, and the practice had to go.

How uncompromisingly would St. John have branded the English Bishops who patronise Vivisection, though it involves cruel injustice to the animal under experiment and the habitual suppression of Christ-like compassion in the experimenter!

The fifth Epistle is addressed to the Church at Sardis, which was the capital of Lydia, an ancient but decaying city. The message alludes plainly to the former greatness of the city (Revelation iii. verses 1), 'Thou hast a name that thou livest and art dead,' and again to the want of watchfulness which had twice resulted in the loss of the citadel. It may be observed here that these Epistles contain unmistakable allusions to the past history of each of the cities to which they are addressed, as well as to the actual condition of the Churches themselves.

The Church of Sardis was evidently drifting into decay like the decaying town, and want of watchfulness was causing loss in spiritual things as it had done before to the town in material things. But though the unpleasant facts are faced in the Letter, the Great Head of the Churches does not fail to recognise the faithful few: 'Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with me in white' (Revelation iii. verse 4), *i.e.*, in the purity of a Christlike life.

The sixth Letter is to the Church of Philadelphia, and is, like that to Smyrna, of almost unqualified approval. Philadelphia was a strong and wealthy city on the slopes of Mount Tmolus. It was

a newly established Church with a great opening before it: 'I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it' (verse 8). It had a difficulty which it shared with other cities: 'A synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie' (verse 9). This apparently means that the Jews not only bitterly opposed Christianity, but made common cause with heathenism against it, as at a later date they helped to burn Polycarp at Smyrna. Of this Church (and the same is true of others), the Spirit says 'I know thy works . . . because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth' (verses 8-10). This prediction was perhaps primarily fulfilled in the general persecution under Domitian not many years after.

The seventh and last Epistle is to Laodicea, a town a few miles from Colosse, which had become very powerful and wealthy under Roman rule. It had been destroyed a few years before by earthquake, and so proud of its wealth were its citizens that they rebuilt the town themselves, thinking it beneath them to accept help from the Roman Emperor, such as other great cities had already obtained. The self-confident attitude of the citizens had not unnaturally repeated itself in the Church. Self-satisfaction had led to lukewarmness, and lukewarmness the Head of the Church condemns more severely than any other state. Revelation iii. verses 15-18: 'I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.'

This condemnation is intended to open the eyes of the Laodiceans to their real condition. Laodicea was a great banking centre, and the message seems to imply that the Church is not to depend on bankers, but on Christ for the true wealth; not on the black woollen cloth for which the town was famous, but on the white raiment of righteousness which Christ alone can bestow; and not on the celebrated local eye-salve called Phrygian Powder, manufactured in tablets in the town for weak eyesight, but on the spiritual eye-salve for dimness of spiritual sight, which Christ is ready to provide, and had indeed provided to some extent in His warning in this Epistle. The message may be summarised thus: Do not depend on

yourself. Come to Christ, or rather receive Him who has come to you. The Divine Lover of man explains His severity: 'As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock. If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me' (verses 19, 20).

A beautiful promise this to the very faulty Church of Laodicea, and to any and every man also who listens to that voice to-day as then, and welcomes the advent of the Christ-spirit. One may notice, also, that the promise 'to him who overcometh,' which has been made in different forms in all the other Epistles, is made in its highest form in this last one: 'To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne' (Revelation iii. verse 21).

The reason why this promise to him that overcometh was made in all the Epistles is because overcoming is the shortest and most practical statement of the life-work of all the Churches, *i.e.*, overcoming evil with good. A glorious destiny is set before the Church, and also before the individual who, whatever his faults or failures, perseveres and overcomes in himself the power of evil. Our Lord's idea of what constitutes a Church is brought before us by the collective teaching of all these Epistles. That idea is not the idea of a select and exclusive body of very superior persons, far above the ordinary level, but of a brotherhood of ordinary men and women who are learning Christ; who are united by common faith to Him as Head, and to one another as members of His Body, the Church, striving to make the old common life of man a new one by living it in a new spirit; fortified by common worship and common sacraments, and the consciousness of the great fellowship in which they walk towards the perfect life of Heaven. Most of the Churches addressed are full of grave faults which are treated with loving severity; but faultiness is evidently regarded as a condition to be expected in the life of a Church on earth.

Repentance for sin is required in the corporate life of the Church, as well as in the individual life of the believer, and the Lord helps that repentance, and as the weakest and most erring Church is helped by Him, so the weakest and most erring member is to be helped by the Church he belongs to. The Spirit of the Lord and the Example of the Lord are the power of the Church's deepest life, as indeed the word Church signifies, being taken from the Greek word meaning 'belonging to the Lord,' which, joined with the Greek word meaning an assembly, gives us the full meaning of 'Church' as 'the assembly belonging to the Lord.'

We must now turn from the first part of the Book, which ends with the Epistle to Laodicea, to the second part which begins with the fourth chapter and ends with the twenty-second. The second part resembles the first in its arrangement, that is to say, it is arranged in sevens. As there are seven Epistles to seven Churches, so there are seven seals, seven trumpets, seven angels, seven thunders, seven vials, seven plagues, seven mystic figures. Seven, denoting completion, is the chief number in the Book, occurring altogether fifty-four times. Even the dragon as the rival of Christ has seven heads, as has the wild beast from the sea and the scarlet beast on which Babylon is seated.

This symbolical use of numbers is not confined to seven. Twelve comes next. The woman, the mother of Christ, has a crown of twelve stars, the new Jerusalem has twelve gates and twelve foundation stones; and ten and four are also favourite numbers. The subject of this great series of Visions is the Coming of Christ in judgment, and the results of that Coming to His enemies and followers respectively. These Visions open in the fourth chapter with the vision of Heaven, the imagery of which is largely taken from Ezekiel. The language is borrowed, but the spirit which breathes through it and the shaping imagination make the whole vision a new and higher thing. St. John boldly places in the midst of the throne 'a Lamb as it had been slain,' a daring symbol of our Lord's Sacrifice of Himself on the Cross, which makes His self-sacrificing Love the highest thing in the Universe. 'And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever' (Revelation v. verse 13). This may be interpreted to mean the recognition of the supreme Kingship of Love, as revealed on the Cross, making the lordship of man over the animal world an elder brother's lordship of blessing.

A long series of visions of judgment follow, the details of which it must be confessed have never yet been identified with events and personages in the history of St. John's time. The reason for this obscurity is not far to seek. Christians in Asia Minor, to encourage and help whom the Book was written, were suffering at the time under persecution, as were the Christians in other parts of the Empire, for the refusal to participate in Emperor-worship, which was held to involve disloyalty to the Empire. The visions were prophecies of the coming of Christ to triumph over the rule of Satan in the world in general, and the great representative of the rule of evil at that time, the world-empire of Rome in particular.

Necessarily, the references to Rome and the Roman Empire had to be veiled as much as possible, for to speak plainly of the guilt and the punishment of Rome would have entailed deplorable consequences to the whole Christian community. Had the contents of the Book been easily understood by heathen readers, a general proscription of all Christians as enemies of the Empire would have followed. Persecution was going on from time to time in different places for the refusal of Emperor-worship, but there was no general proscription as yet throughout the Empire.

A great change had come over the attitude of the Christians towards the Empire since St. Paul in Romans, and St. Peter in I Peter, had both of them urged complete submission to the Emperor and his Government.

The Roman Empire, as the great enemy of the Church of Christ, had become identified in the eyes of Christians, when St. John wrote this book, with the Empire of Evil in the world. It possessed the authority and embodied the spirit of Satan. The Roman Emperor had become the Wild Beast, and the Church of Christ was engaged in a conflict the issue of which was to be settled by the coming of Christ in judgment and the fall of Rome, described in chapter xvii. as 'the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus,' who sits 'upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy' (verses 3-6).

What was the cause of this astonishing change? The immediate cause is to be found in the catastrophe which had taken place in Rome in July 64 A.D., the great fire which destroyed for nine days the capital of the Empire. This fire, which caused untold misery to vast multitudes, was universally attributed to the Emperor Nero, who, fearful of a revolution, determined to transfer the guilt with its punishment to the Christians in Rome, already unpopular owing to the strictness of their lives. As Tacitus had the worst possible opinion of Christianity, considering that it involved hatred of the human race, his evidence in the *Annals*, which is supported by that of Suetonius, cannot be questioned. 'A huge multitude were convicted,' he writes, 'not so much on the charge of incendiarism, as for their hatred of the human race.' These martyrs were put to death with the most frightful tortures, the Emperor's cruelty being on a par with his cowardice. The *Annals* tell the story: 'And various forms of mockery were added to increase their dying agonies. Covered with the skins of wild beasts, they were condemned to die by the mangling of dogs, or by crucifixion, or to be set on fire and burned after twilight to supply a nightly illumination. Nero offered his own gardens for this spectacle, and gave a chariot race, mixing

with the mob, and dressed as a charioteer, or driving about among them.' The worst torture, the burning, with a stake to hold up the chin, as living torches, evidently made a lasting impression in Rome, to judge by Juvenal's allusions to it in his eighth satire.

The suddenness of this change in the attitude of the Imperial Government from protection to persecution must have greatly increased the horror with which the Christians regarded this atrocious injustice. The news of the suffering of the Brethren would, of course, be carried to the Churches in all parts of the Empire, but something more than mere reports of persecution the writer had not witnessed is needed to account for the white-hot wrath against Rome and the Emperor which glows in the pages of the Revelation. The accounts St. John gives in chaps. xvii. and xviii. describing the judgment of Babylon, that is Rome, have the personal note of one who had been present in Rome, and witnessed the persecution. The judgment is that the woman arrayed in scarlet, who represents Babylon, is to be burned with fire, and at the smoke of her burning the writer cries, 'Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her' (Revelation xviii. 20). This seems a clear reference to the Neronian persecution. Again in chapter xix., when the Word of God, faithful and true, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, has smitten the forces of evil, we read: 'And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he had deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire, burning with brimstone' (Revelation xix. verse 20). Could anything be more appropriate as a symbol of punishment than a lake burning with brimstone for the Emperor Nero, who had burned the Christians alive to light his Vatican gardens by night? May not this imagery of the lake of fire and brimstone, to which St. John returns in the next chapter, have been inspired by the righteous indignation of one who had watched with haggard eyes, his martyred brethren in their pitchy tunics bathed in lakelets of sulphurous flame, lighting the Imperial gardens, while the 'Wild Beast' Emperor drove his chariot up and down to enjoy the spectacle of their torments? Thus understood, the imagery of the fire and brimstone would represent a just judgment of exact retaliation on the spirit of evil represented by the Beast, that is the Emperor Nero, the guilty author of the great persecution, and the false prophet, which means probably the priesthood of Emperor-worship. But it must always be remembered that St. John, if at times 'the Son of Thunder,' the natural man in him, spoke out, was fully aware that the Captain of the Armies of

Heaven, the Christ, always overcomes evil with good, and that His servants, the Christian Churches, are to win a spiritual victory over the Beast, not by the sword ('he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword,' Revelation xxiii. verse 10), but by quiet martyrdoms—the way of the cross—and patient and gentle endurance of savage persecution, the patience and faith of the Saints. The Neronian persecution in Rome made itself felt long after in a new attitude towards Christians, an increase in local persecutions in the provinces for the refusal of Emperor-worship, the demand for which was made the means of discovering Christianity and the refusal of which brought recusants to execution. Against this worship, the direct worship of the Emperor's image or statue, the Church spoke out decidedly, and St. John in this Book of the Revelation urges repeatedly the duty of Christians to refuse to comply, even at the cost of enduring torture and death. It will be enough to quote two passages. The first contains a tremendous warning of the consequences of this worship, a warning evidently required in the province of Asia, where temples for Emperor-worship were numerous, and the worship enforced rigorously by the whole power of the province.

'And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and received his mark in his forehead or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name' (Revelation xiv. verses 9-11).

The second is a vision of victory, the reward of those who have been faithful unto death, 'which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years' (Revelation xx. verse 4).

We have assumed already that the Beast (or rather Wild Beast) represents the Roman Emperor, as is indeed sufficiently clear. Turning to chapter xiii. verse 18, we read: 'Here is wisdom (*i.e.*, this the meaning), Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man, and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.' Here St. John gives us a means of identifying the particular Emperor of whom he writes, and whom he did not dare to name.

It has been found that the name of Nero Cæsar, written in Hebrew letters, amounts in numerical value to 666. The value of the Hebrew letters severally is $50 + 200 + 6 + 50 + 100 + 60 + 200 = 666$. This identification, though not absolutely certain, seems highly probable, and the earliest Christian writers on the subject connect some one of the Emperors with the Beast. Some early Christian students came near this solution long ago, Irenæus tells us, with the words *Lateinos* (a Latin) or *Teitan* (an old name for the sun), the value of either of which was 666. They perceived clearly that the Beast here represented the Roman Emperor, but till the spelling in Hebrew letters was thought of, the number of the Beast would not work out to spell Nero's name.

But what one feels is that this and like discoveries, even if they became unquestioned certainties, while they would increase the distinctness of the meaning of the visions and add to the interest, would in no way appreciably add to the real value, which is to be found in the spiritual meaning, the religious message of the Book. Whether these identifications are made or not—and numbers of other identifications have been made, most of them with very limited probability—the message remains the same, the certainty of the manifold coming of Christ to His Church and to the World and the certainty of His ultimate victory.

The whole Book pulses and thrills with a glorious faith in Christ which flames up in the teeth of circumstances, and faces present failure and even persecution and death in the realised consciousness of final triumph over evil. This was the dauntless, God-given faith in Christ and His Body, the Church, and His cause, the higher destiny of man, of which the same St. John wrote at a later date in his first Epistle: 'This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith' (1 John v. verse 4). Assuming that the book was written by St. John in his living entombment in Patmos, it is a splendid example of the liberty Christ bestows, for this voice from an earthly prison-house is full of the freedom and the joy of highest heaven.

One identification, however, is really important. It is to be found in chapter xvii., which tells of the Fall of Rome, unmistakably meant by the name of Babylon. The scarlet-coloured Beast in this chapter is the Emperor and its seven heads the seven Emperors. We read in the tenth verse, 'And there are seven kings; five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come. The five kings are interpreted to be: Augustus, Tiberias, Gaius (Caligula), Claudius, and Nero: the sixth king then reigning was thus Galba. Nero killed himself to escape capture in June 68 A.D., and Galba was murdered in January 69. The date at which the Revelation was given to St. John

may, therefore, be placed between June 68 and January 69. This date is supported indirectly by the eleventh chapter, the beginning of which shows clearly that the book was written before the Temple and Jerusalem fell, in the year 70 A.D. The later date, in the reign of Domitian, though well supported by tradition, especially by Irenæus, is contrary to the internal evidence, and the earlier date, either in Galba's reign or at any rate before the fall of Jerusalem, helps us very materially to arrive at a right solution of the problem of the authorship.

The problem is briefly this: How could the mind which wrote the Revelation have written the Gospel? and one may say at once that the difference of style is so considerable between these books that, if a late date in Domitian's reign be given to the Revelation, and an earlier date be given to the Gospel, it is impossible to understand how they could have had the same author. Spiritually the Gospel is far in advance of the Revelation. The man who wrote the Revelation might well advance, in years spent in Christian life and Christian meditation, to the calmer, loftier, and larger vision of truth in the Gospel. The man who had reached that standpoint, the highest reached by any writer in the New Testament except himself in a few passages in his first Epistle, could not have gone back to the cruder and less lofty standpoint of the Revelation.

Taking the date of the Revelation to be before the year 70 and the date of the Gospel to be nearly thirty years later, the spiritual progress shown is natural and credible. The early date which has been here assigned to the Revelation helps us also to explain the solecisms of style and especially the mistakes of grammar in the Revelation, as contrasted with the absence of such barbarisms in the Gospel. St. John, whose native tongue was Aramaic, attempts in the Revelation to use Greek as if, like Aramaic, it had no case endings.

By the time he wrote the Gospel, some thirty years later, he had become sufficiently familiar with Greek (living in the Greek city of Ephesus and among Greek-speaking disciples) to write the Greek language without barbarisms, though without idioms. A comparison of the contents of the Revelation with the contents of the Gospel amply sustains the old view that the two books had the same author. Here are a few coincidences: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,' begins the Gospel, and introduces a name of our Lord which is found also in Revelation xix. verse 13: 'And his name is called The Word of God.'

Our Lord's pre-existence, taught in the first chapter of the Gospel, is taught throughout the Revelation implicitly or directly. As the

title 'the Word' is common to both Books, so is that wonderfully expressive and beautiful title, 'the Lamb,' which occurs twenty-nine times in the Revelation, and nowhere else in the New Testament as a title of our Lord, except in the Gospel. St. John i. verse 29: 'Behold the Lamb of God.' In the first chapter of the Revelation, seventh verse, we read, 'Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him,' and we remember that the piercing of our Lord's side by the soldier's spear is recorded in St. John's Gospel alone.

Again, in Revelation xxii. verse 17, we find: 'And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely': while in St. John's Gospel we read: 'If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.'

These coincidences (and the list might be added to) are quite sufficient for our purpose. The same remarkable mind is certainly to be discovered in both books: and thus the internal evidence confirms the ancient tradition of the Church. The religious value of the Book, while less than that of the Gospel, is very high: Christ begins and Christ ends it.

The faith in a Risen and Glorious Christ, who is at once 'the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,' and 'the King of kings and Lord of lords' (Revelation xix. verses 16), is the inspiration of the Book. He is not only placed far above all created beings, but to Him belongs of right the title of eternity. 'Alpha and Omega: the beginning and the end, the first and the last' (Revelation xxii. verse 13).

Finally, He shares the throne of God: 'And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. . . . And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him' (Revelation xxii. verses 1, 3).

He is also, equally with God, the Temple and the Light of the Holy City, New Jerusalem.

'And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof' (Revelation xxi. verses 22, 23).

It may be noted that in the last verse, Christ, the true Light of the first chapter of the Gospel, is the Light of the New Jerusalem; another coincidence which marks the one authorship.

The Book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ is as necessary to the Churches of the twentieth century as it was to those of the first. As the Risen and Ascended Christ was coming to the nations then—

a manifold coming, which St. John in this Book strove to help the Church to realise—so He is coming now.

To help men to realise that manifold coming in the life of the community, as well as in the life of the individual, was the main object of the message of the Book of the Revelation.

The coming of Christ is intimately connected with its result, which, as He comes and is received as Lord by the individual and the society, He gradually effects, namely, the conquest over evil in both. Our Lord's coming to us must be met by our overcoming evil for His sake, and by the power which our union with him communicates to us we are able to overcome it. St. John remained an optimist, though looking out from Patmos over the whole world of that day lying in wickedness. His faith remained steadfast in Christ, the divine victor over evil, who could and would give victory at last to all His faithful followers. In the midst of his living death at Patmos, he saw the day of that victory as if it had already come. He saw before his eyes the first fruits in the redemption of the individual; he saw in the future the perfect harvest in the redemption of society. His faith, which has been marvellously justified through the centuries, in the very gradual but real fulfilment of his predictions, expresses itself in the vision of a new heaven and a new earth to which the redeemed society, represented however imperfectly by the universal Church, comes down from God. Revelation xxi. 1-6: 'And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the Holy City, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of Heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the Tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, or crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.'

The vision of the New Jerusalem, the society of the future, the kingdom of God which Jesus brought to man, was intended firstly to sustain and encourage the persecuted Christians of the times when it was written, and secondly to fulfil the same office to all Christians for all time. The life of the citizens of this ideal society is simply the common life of man, redeemed and consecrated by the self-sacrificing love of Christ, who gives to those in union with Him, and through them to the world, this high and heavenly love as the inspiration of their lives. Revelation xxi. verse 10:

'And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high moun-

tain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; and had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates; and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: on the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. . . . And I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. - And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life. And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord giveth them light, and they shall reign for ever and ever.'

Such is St. John's picture of the ideal redeemed society which is to reach and regenerate all the nations of the earth. Redemption of the individual has long been an accepted fact, but the redemption of the larger organism, the community, is necessarily slower in coming; but what has been accomplished—the achievement of the Holy Spirit of Christ in the world—points to greater and greater achievements, to nearer and nearer approach to the ideal perfection of the Holy City. The organized effort to overcome evil in the community, the purposeful life lived for the regeneration of society is commoner to-day than ever before. Evils bulk larger before us because we have begun to observe them, and to consider how we are to remove them. But optimism ought to be far easier for us

than it was for St. John. We have the evidence of what has been done to cheer us on to a hopeful estimate of what can be done. Our duty to-day is exactly what St. John urged on Christians of his time. It is to overcome evil with good, both in ourselves and in the society to which we belong. That is the way to hasten and to welcome the Lord's coming.

Practical attempts to effect the regeneration of society are numerous, and deal with various aspects of the general evil from which society as well as the individual suffers. These attempts, where they proceed from an ardent desire for the betterment of the community, even when they do not claim the name of Christian, are eminently Christian. We must content ourselves here, owing to our limited space, with mentioning one of the most hopeful of recent attempts to regenerate the rising generation—the George Junior Republic at Freeville, in New York State, which has worked out a wonderfully successful method of reclaiming boys and girls who have made a bad start in life. The essential principle of this method is self-government, the appeal to the latent capacities of citizenship in the young. The golden rule of the institution, learned from experience, is that the inmates should work for what they once received as charity—a rule long ago anticipated by St. Paul, when he wrote to the Thessalonians the command 'that if any would not work, neither should he eat.' The great principle of self-government, though its wonderfully good effect on boy and girl character was all Mr. George's own discovery, was also long ago anticipated by St. Paul, who insisted on it as an essential principle of the Christian community, *e.g.*, 'Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?'

In the George Junior Republic a single place of worship suffices for all the different denominations, being used at one time for one denomination and at another time for another. The idea of disciplining the character by an ordered mode of common life is, of course, not peculiar to Mr. George's institution. The communities of monks that grew out of the early hermits exhibited the effective working of this idea, though in place of self-government they depended on the obligation of obedience to a Superior. Here we may look at our picture of a monk in a tree.

A word must be said in conclusion on an interesting feature of the Book of the Revelation: the Hymns of the Redeemed, the Songs of Heaven, in which we have perhaps the earliest hymns of the Church, except some passages in St. Paul's Epistles. The hymns to be now given are taken from the Authorised Version printed in paragraphs. The singing of the first hymn is in Heaven. The Lamb

alone has been found worthy to open the sealed book of God's purposes for mankind. Revelation v. verses 8-14: 'And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, saying,

Thou art worthy to take the book,
And to open the seals thereof:
For thou wast slain,
And hast redeemed us to God by thy blood
Out of every kindred, and tongue,
And people, and nation;
And hast made us unto our God
King and priests:
And we shall reign on the earth.

And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands; saying, with a loud voice,

Worthy is the Lamb that was slain
To receive power, and riches,
And wisdom, and strength, and honour,
And glory, and blessing.

And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying,

Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power,
Be unto him that sitteth upon the throne,
And unto the Lamb for ever and ever.'

Again in the fifteenth chapter of the Revelation we hear the Hymn of the martyrs who had suffered death for their refusal to join in Emperor-worship. Revelation xv. verses 2-5: 'And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass having the harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying,

Great and marvellous are thy works,
Lord God Almighty;
Just and true are thy ways,
Thou King of Saints.
Who shall not fear thee, O Lord,
And glorify thy name?
For thou only art holy:
For all nations shall come
And worship before thee;
For thy judgments are made manifest.'

Lastly may be given the Hymn of rejoicing with which the Church of Christ welcomes the mystic union with her Lord (Revelation xix. verses 6-8): 'And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying,

Alleluia:
For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.
Let us be glad and rejoice,
And give honour to him:
For the marriage of the Lamb is come,
And his wife has made herself ready.

And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.'

THE END.

‘ALL HAIL’

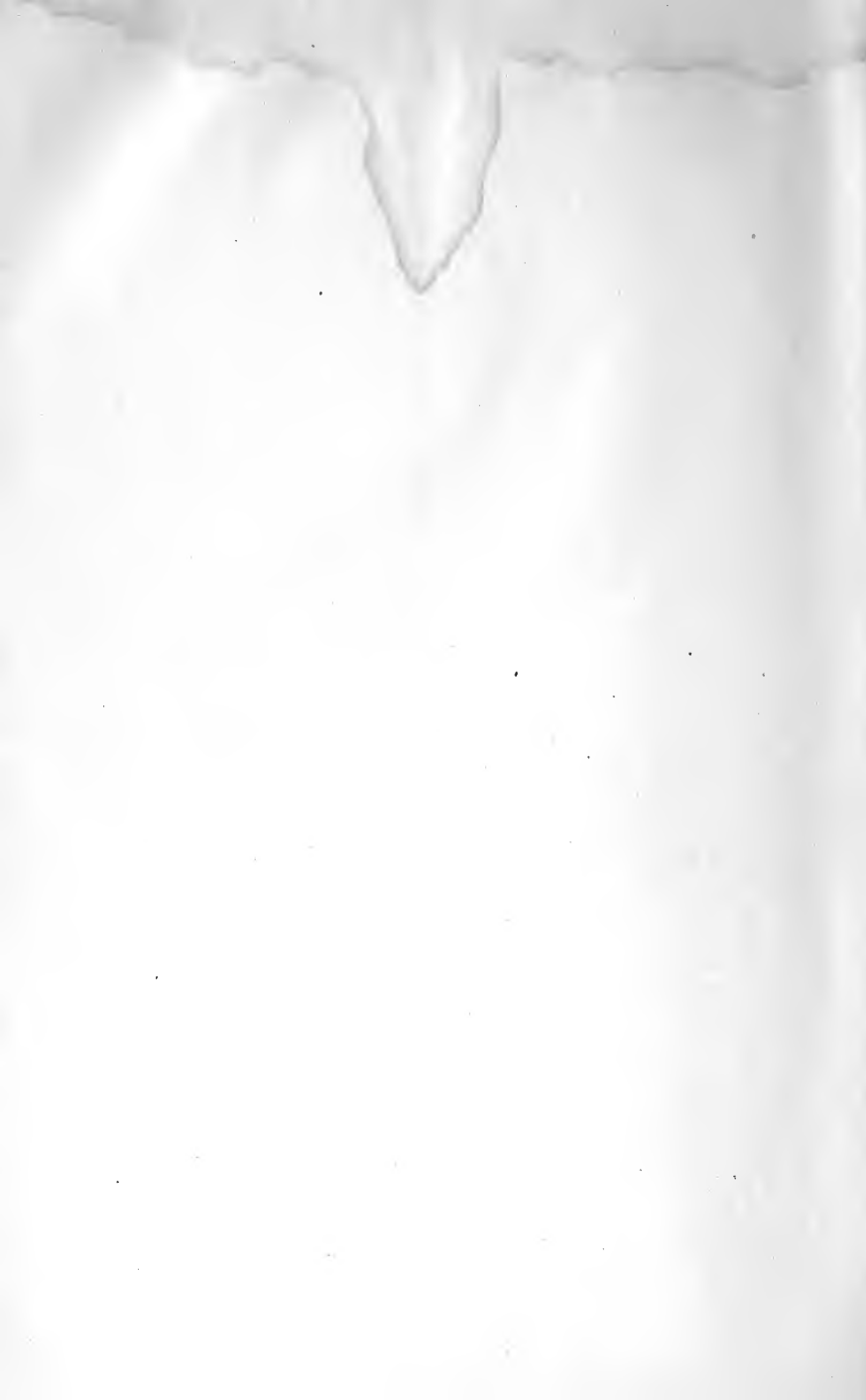
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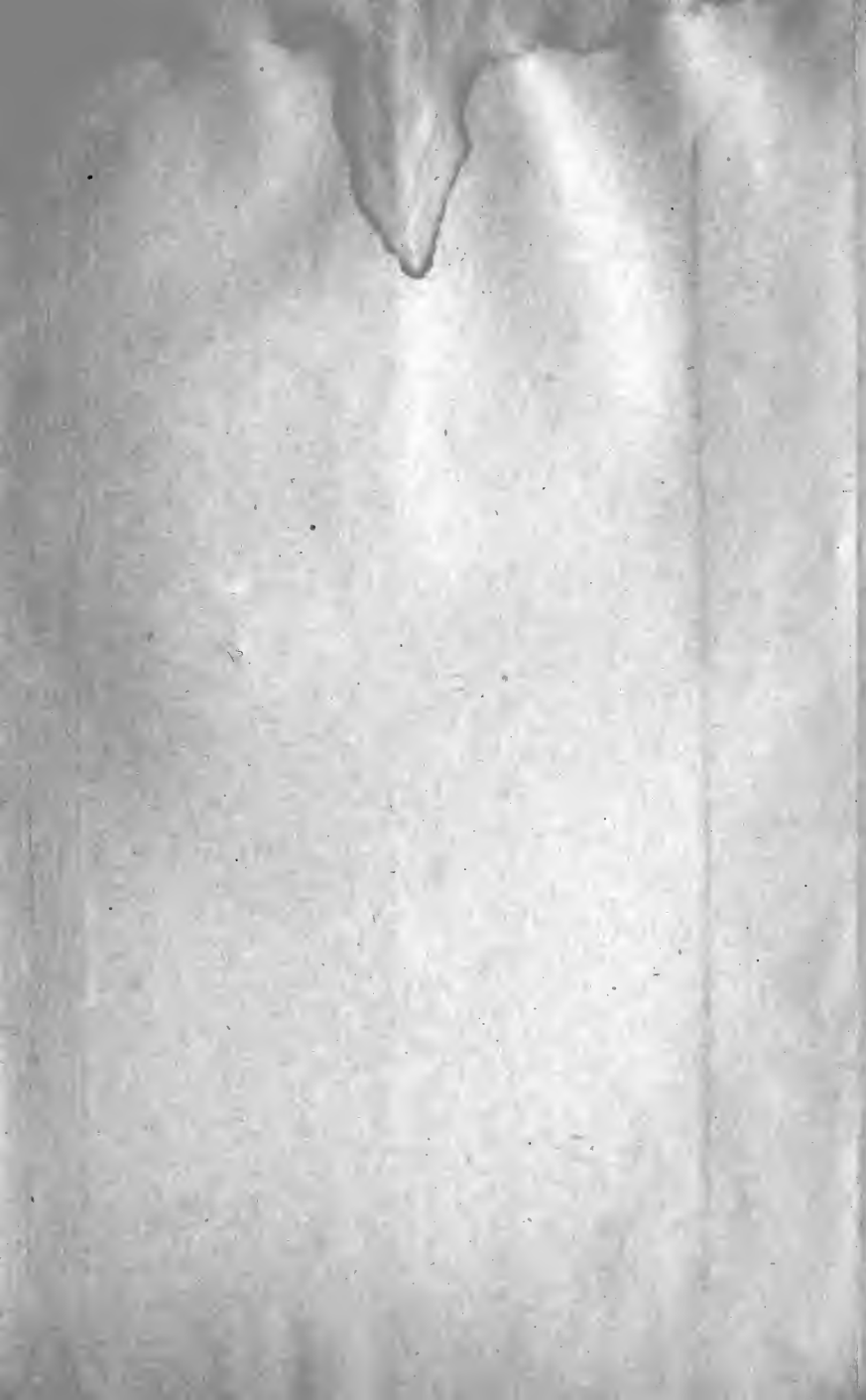
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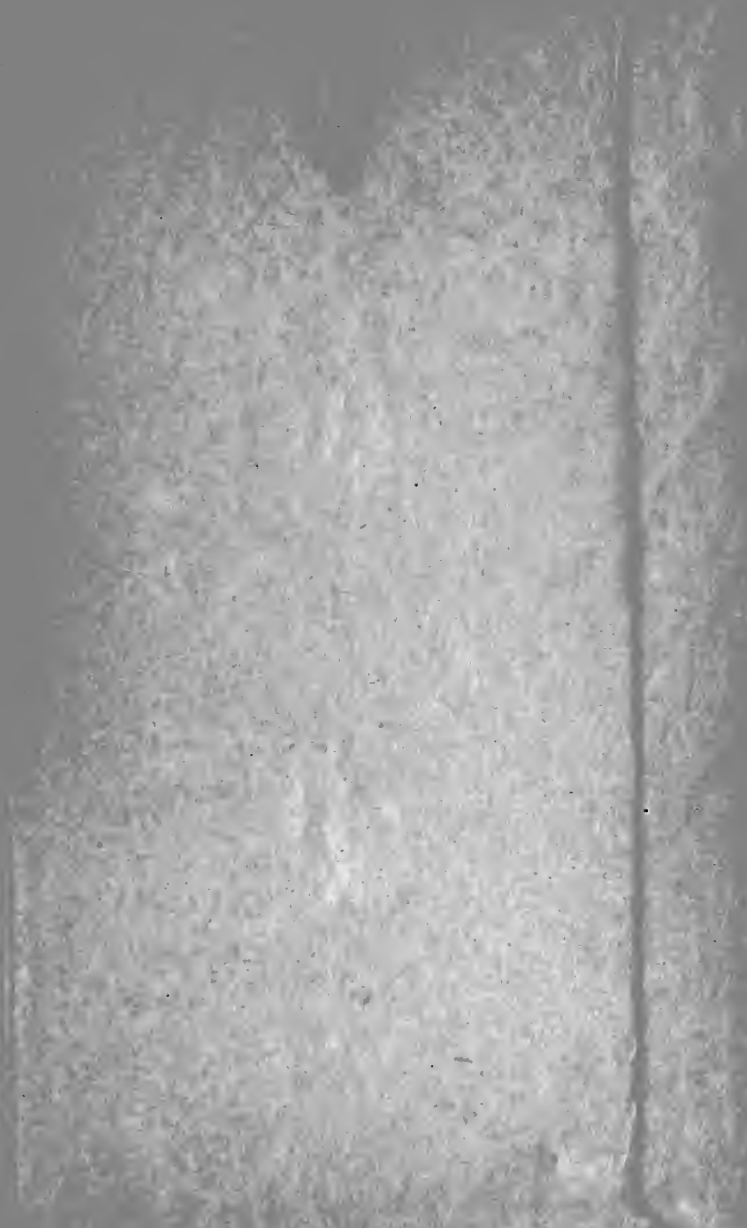






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